

ORGANISATION FOR DISASTER

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CIVIL DEFENCE
IN NEW ZEALAND: 1959-1970

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GLOSSARY

<u>A.J.H.R.</u>	Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives.
<u>B.N.Z.S.E.E.</u>	Bulletin of the New Zealand Society for Earthquake Engineering.
<u>E.P.S.</u>	Emergency Precautions Scheme.
<u>G.A.M.D.</u>	'Government Action in Major Disaster', 1966.
<u>G.A.M.E.</u>	'Government Action in a Major Emergency', 1954.
<u>H.O.C.R.</u>	Head Office Conference Reports.
<u>M.O.W.</u>	Ministry of Works.
<u>N.C.D.C.</u>	National Civil Defence Committee.
<u>N.Z.P.D.</u>	New Zealand Parliamentary Debates.
<u>N.Z.S.S. 1900</u>	New Zealand Standards Specification 1900.
<u>R.C.D.C.</u>	Regional Civil Defence Committee.
<u>R.R.S.</u>	Report of Royal Society of New Zealand earthquake risk sub-committee.

PREFACE

New Zealand's history is punctuated with the devastation wrought by nature. Yet, only within the last few years has the country possessed a permanent and comprehensive emergency organisation - civil defence - capable of responding to the ever-present threat of earthquake, fire, flood and storm.

The present civil defence organisation is of relatively recent origin, though New Zealand's interest in the subject is not new, and dates to the early 1930's. Previous civil defence measures were, however, either ill-conceived or ephemeral and, until recently, the obvious danger of natural disaster was consistently subordinated to the demands for protecting the country against hypothetical threats of enemy attack.

Although the bulk of this thesis is concerned with the development of civil defence since the creation of a Ministry of Civil Defence in April 1959, the more historical aspect of the subject cannot be ignored, for not only are previous civil defence measures of significance in their own right, but certain features associated with them were to be perpetuated after 1959.

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CHAPTER I

THE FORMATIVE PERIOD: 1924-1957

New Zealand has always shown a readiness, when required, to adopt the ideas and practices of other countries. This has been especially true in the field of civil defence where British experience in particular has been heavily, if at times unquestioningly, drawn upon. This chapter, essentially historical, traces the development of civil defence measures in this country and Britain over a period of forty years, from the Great War until the late 1950's. Within this period British influence on New Zealand civil defence became firmly established. But while this influence was in many respects to prove beneficial, the connection established between civil defence and wartime passive defence was, in part, to be responsible for the delay in this country's full appreciation of a problem which did not concern British civil defence - the problem of natural disaster.

Britain: The origins of civil defence

The Great War witnessed the advent of aerial bombing and for the first time civilian populations became of important strategic significance. The sporadic German raids over Britain led quickly to a realisation of the potential of such tactics and prompted an enquiry into methods by which a future threat of this type could be countered. In 1924 the Committee of Imperial Defence set up an air raid precautions (A.R.P.) sub-committee to study the problem.¹ This committee and other advisory bodies

¹T.H. O'Brien, Civil Defence, History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Civil Series, ed., Sir Keith Hancock. (London, H.M.S.O. and Longmans, 1955), pp. 13 ff.

continued their investigations until the mid 1930's when the deteriorating international scene required the implementation of an air raid protection and civil defence scheme. The Cabinet's approval of £100,000 for A.R.P. equipment in 1935 registered the beginning of civil defence in Britain.¹

As it developed from 1935 onwards, British civil defence was designed to form the passive defences of the country against enemy attack. Though New Zealand was to establish a similar organisation when war broke out, the inception of civil defence in this country was motivated by entirely different circumstances.

New Zealand: The Public Safety Conservation Act

In 1929 part of the Nelson region was devastated by an earthquake. Fortunately, the epicenter was located in a sparsely populated area and only seventeen people were killed.² Two years later 260 people died in the Napier earthquake.³

This earthquake struck a city which was totally unprepared.⁴ The nearby town of Hastings was also severely damaged and in both centres citizen committees were immediately established to organise and implement rescue and relief operations. Although central Government rapidly provided various forms of assistance, coping with the disaster remained essentially a local responsibility.⁵ The citizens' committees remained in control for some

¹ T.H. O'Brien, Civil Defence, p. 52.

² The Murchison earthquake registered Force 7 on the Richter Scale.

³ The Napier earthquake registered Force $7\frac{3}{4}$ on the Richter Scale.

⁴ For a brief description of the Napier earthquake see Eugene C. Grayland, New Zealand Disasters (Wellington, A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1957), pp. 124-32.

⁵ Later in the year the Government passed the Napier Earthquake Act which provided finance for the rebuilding of the devastated area.

time following the earthquake, though in the case of the Hastings committee it handed over to the Borough Council after two weeks as it was 'hampered in every way by lack of authority and by a lack of much needed support'.¹

In the absence of any existing emergency legislation some conflicts of authority had inevitably occurred during the rescue and relief operations, and the Government's introduction of a Public Safety Conservation Bill in the following year was partly in response to this problem.

The Government's primary motive for introducing the legislation was the desire to control and prevent civil disturbances, such as the rioting which had taken place in Auckland during 1932 as a result of the economic situation.² Provisions to deal with the consequences of natural disaster were also incorporated in the Bill, but in view of their limited scope they appeared as little more than an afterthought in a Bill primarily concerned with civil disorders.

The legislation gave the Government power to declare a state of emergency in any part of the country in cases of both civil disorder and natural disaster and, if a proclamation could not be issued immediately, responsibility for the situation was to rest with the senior police officer in the locality. The relevant section of the Bill stated:

¹Edwin F. Scott, 'Report on relief organisation out of Hawke's Bay earthquake', in Christchurch (N.Z.) Public Utilities sub-committee report on "Public Emergencies arising from 'major disaster'" (Christchurch, unpublished, 1934), p. 16.

²In respect to the anti-riot provisions, the Public Safety Conservation Act, based on the British Emergency Powers Act of 1920, is one of the most repressive pieces of legislation ever enacted in New Zealand.

In any case of public emergency, whether arising from earthquake, fire, flood, public disorder, or otherwise howsoever, in which, owing to the suddenness of the occurrence, the interruption of communications, or any other cause, the foregoing provisions of this Act cannot be put into operation immediately, the senior officer of the Police Force present in the locality shall assume responsibility for the issuing of all orders and instructions necessary in his opinion for the preservation of life, the protection of property, and the maintenance of order.¹

The parliamentary debate was almost completely concerned with civil disorders and very little was said about the problem of natural disaster. The Prime Minister, G.W. Forbes, in introducing the Bill to the House, made one of the longer comments on its relation to natural disaster when he stated:

I consider that it can be safely left to the Police to take charge in cases of fire, upheaval, earthquake, or anything of that kind, and to remain in charge during such times of the emergency. The senior office of the Police will be the rallying point.²

The only significant thing the Bill achieved was to define the position of the Police during an emergency. No provision was made for the planning of disaster counter measures by either central Government or the local authorities.

Although the Public Safety Conservation Act represented the only consideration shown by the Government for the problem of natural disaster at that time, some urban local authorities set up organisations of varying degrees of efficiency to meet the threat of any future disasters. These organisations were to provide the nuclei around which wartime civil defence was built.

¹ New Zealand Statutes, Public Safety Conservation Act, 1932, Section 4.

² N.Z.P.D., Vol. 232, p. 175, 19 April, 1932.

Britain: Continuing development

Responding to the deteriorating European scene, the British Government in 1935 embarked upon a rearmament programme and began to proceed rapidly with the development of civil defence, which, as part of Home defence was given first priority in the rearmament programme.

During the previous decade, the idea of having a single government department responsible for civil defence, at least in peacetime, had been dismissed. This was reappraised in 1935 and an A.R.P. Department was created in the Home Office 'to act on behalf of the various Government Departments concerned with air raid defence'.¹ In the same year the local authorities were approached by the Government to co-operate in the setting up of A.R.P. organisations.²

The trend towards centralised administration of civil defence was taken a step further in 1938 with the appointment of a Cabinet Minister, Sir John Anderson, who was to co-ordinate all those departments involved with civil defence³ and be directly responsible for the A.R.P. The extension of Government preparations at this time, beyond the immediate demands of the passive defences of the A.R.P., resulted in the emergence of the term 'civil defence' to describe 'almost all the exceptional war-time

¹ T.H. O'Brien, Civil Defence, p. 60.

² Under the Air Raid Precautions Act of 1937 local A.R.P. schemes required the approval of the Home Secretary.

³ These included Food (Defence Plans) Department of the Board of Trade, the Ministry of Transport, the Ministry of Labour, the Board of Education and Scottish Department of Education, and the Ministry of Health and Department of Health for Scotland - D.N. Chester, ed., The Organisation of British Central Government 1914-1956 (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1957), p. 244.

measures to be undertaken by civil departments'.¹ Until war broke out, Anderson administered his duties as Lord Privy Seal, but then became both Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security. The latter portfolio gave him responsibility for all the passive defence services previously administered by the Home Secretary, together with the function of co-ordinating the war-time services of all other civil departments.

Between the central administration in London and the local authorities came the regions. The adoption of a regional approach to civil defence had been prompted by experience with the Civil Emergency Organisation formed soon after the end of the Great War. This organisation, operating on a regional basis, was used during the General Strike of 1926 and had remained in skeleton form ever since.

Each civil defence region² was the responsibility of a Regional Commissioner, appointed by the Crown, who was to provide the co-ordination between central Government and the local authorities. In this capacity he was to ensure that Government directives were carried out and assume supervisory control over the civil defence activities of those Government departments operating within his region. If communications between the Home Security headquarters and the regions were broken through the devastation of London, or invasion, each Regional Commissioner could, at his own discretion, 'take over full powers of civil government and be held indemnified for everything done in good

¹T.H. O'Brien, Civil Defence, p. 117.

²In 1941 thirteen regions covered England, Scotland and Wales.

faith'.¹ Under 'normal' conditions the Regional Commissioners operated in an essentially supervisory and co-ordinating role, the formal contact between the regions and the local authorities being provided by regional officers of the A.R.P.

Despite the urgency with which the British Government viewed the situation in the late 1930's many local authorities were slow and reluctant in becoming involved with civil defence, particularly where it incurred local expenditure. There was a tendency on the part of many to regard A.R.P. as a burden and a matter not really of their concern. This attitude caused the Government on a number of occasions to reiterate its view that A.R.P. was not a service to the Government, but one to the community in which there was a part for all to play.

Apart from the higher level positions in the local organisations, membership was voluntary. The Government wished to maintain strong emphasis on A.R.P. as a local voluntary service rooted in local leadership and enthusiasm, and adapting plans evolved at the centre to local differences. Problems arose, however, due to the shortage of full-time personnel, a result of the low wages being paid, the low prestige of the service, and also because the question of compensation for injury or death had not been resolved.

Further problems arose in the field of industrial civil defence² where employers, in many cases, were slow in organising

¹ T.H. O'Brien, Civil Defence, p. 185.

² Industrial civil defence refers to civil defence as it concerns the protection of people within factories, shops, commercial buildings, railway stations, etc.

A.R.P. units and air raid shelters for their workers. Greater progress with this aspect of civil defence was not made until the Civil Defence Act was passed in 1939.

Following the outbreak of war and through the ensuing period of the 'Phoney War', many unforeseen contingencies arose. Military planners had considered that Germany might deliver a lightning blow against Britain as soon as war was declared, or even before. When this blow failed to come a considerable amount of criticism was levelled at the Government for what was generally termed over-insurance. The central problem was one of maintaining a state of readiness in many services in vulnerable areas for an indefinite period. This tended to affect numbers, efficiency, and morale. Boredom amongst volunteers and the lack of public prestige, particularly in the face of newspaper criticism caused many people to leave the service. This particular situation was remedied, though many new problems arose, with the onset of German bombing in 1940.

One of the many features of British civil defence which was to have a close parallel in New Zealand, was the recruitment of retired military men into civil defence. In Britain many of the Regional Commissioners and Regional Officers of the A.R.P. were retired military personnel who constituted:

The vanguard of a military penetration of significance (into civil defence). Persons of military training and experience were to contribute substantially ... to civil defence in peace and war. If their conceptions of administration were sometimes in conflict with civilian views and methods, this result was unavoidable; for civil defence was both civil and military.¹

¹T.H. O'Brien, Civil Defence, p. 181.

When the demand for a civil defence scheme arose in New Zealand, characteristically, this country turned to Britain, and had the benefit of being able to adopt a system of civil defence which, although still evolving, was at an advanced stage of development. But while this was advantageous for New Zealand, it did not prevent the repetition of some of the problems which had beset British civil defence at various times.

New Zealand: Wartime civil defence

Because of its geographical isolation, New Zealand's reaction to the deteriorating international situation was slower than Britain's. In preparing for civil defence the Government decided in 1938 to initiate the development of emergency precautions organisations throughout the country. The responsibility for preparing a general scheme was placed with the Department of Internal Affairs, which, after consultation with the principal local authorities in 1939, issued two handbooks under the title of Emergency Precautions Scheme (E.P.S.); one for urban authorities, the other for rural.

The E.P.S. was designed to meet emergency conditions arising from enemy attack, epidemics, earthquakes, and other natural disasters, although obviously at this time the first contingency was the main concern. The local authorities were requested by the Government to adopt the E.P.S. and their response, 'generally speaking ... was good'.¹

As well as adopting the British principle that community

¹ A.J.H.R., Report of the National Service Department, H.11A, 1943, p. 9.

safety was primarily a local authority responsibility, membership of the E.P.S. organisations was also placed on a voluntary basis. But during the early stages of development personnel problems occurred, with the work tending to fall onto the willing few enthusiasts. This problem was particularly acute in the main centres and large towns, and persisted until early in 1942.

With the advance of the Japanese into South East Asia and the Pacific Islands, the bombing of New Zealand, which had previously been thought unlikely, was now considered a possibility. Responding to this threat, the Government felt it necessary to introduce an extensive fire watching service in the main centres, but the availability of personnel imposed limitations on the feasibility of such a scheme. The Government then decided that as the E.P.S. was for the safety of the community as a whole, membership should be made compulsory. This applied to all British subjects between the ages of 18 and 65 if they were not serving in the armed forces.

The period of greatest E.P.S. activity took place during 1942 when the Japanese threat was at its height. In January of that year the Government introduced the Emergency Shelter Regulations which provided for the construction of public and industrial shelters. The main centres and ports, considered the most likely and vulnerable targets, were given the highest priority. The construction of shelters was the responsibility of the local authorities though the Government made substantial subsidy contributions.¹ By the end of March 1943, there were sufficient

¹The subsidy ratio was 75% Government, 25% local authorities. To 31 March 1943 the Government had paid out £700,000 in shelter construction subsidies. A.J.H.R., H.11A, 1943, p. 16.

shelters in the country to protect 150,000 people.¹

Local authority fire brigades were supplemented by E.P.S. fire sections which were intended to provide the main protection for residential areas. An Emergency Fire Service was also formed to supplement the regular fire brigades in their protection of the commercial areas of the main centres and ports. Although these fire services were never called into action as the result of enemy attack, the National Service Department commented that:

Throughout the severe emergency period in 1942 a very high standard of keenness and enthusiasm was evidenced, and, having regard to the limitations imposed by the short supply of essential imported equipment, particularly fire hose, a very reasonable standard of efficiency was attained.²

The threat of Japanese air attack was felt so keenly during this period that the Government had drawn up plans for the evacuation of the civilian population from vulnerable areas if it became necessary, and, in the event of invasion, a plan for a scorched earth policy had been formulated by the Army and was to be implemented by the E.P.S.

Operational and Administrative Organisation of the E.P.S.

The E.P.S., with the Home Guard, Women's War Service Auxiliary and the Emergency Fire Service formed the Emergency Reserve Corps. This Corps was established in August 1940 and formed part of the nation's military establishment.³ The E.P.S., however, was not

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 17.

³ Administrative responsibility for the E.P.S. had been transferred from the Department of Internal Affairs to the Department of National Service in June 1940.

under military control,¹ executive authority being invested in each local body operating an E.P.S. organisation.

Closely following British practice, the country was sub-divided into three regions, each the responsibility of a Regional Commissioner. The regions in turn were sub-divided into a total of sixteen districts, each administered by a Controller. The regions corresponded to the three existing military districts and the functions of the Commissioners were similar to those of their British counterparts, to the extent that they were responsible for co-ordination between the E.P.S. organisations and the armed forces, and for supervising all the E.P.S. services within their regions.

At the local authority level, a central committee of councillors possessed overall responsibility for the E.P.S. organisation, while operational control rested with a headquarters unit. (See Fig. I.)

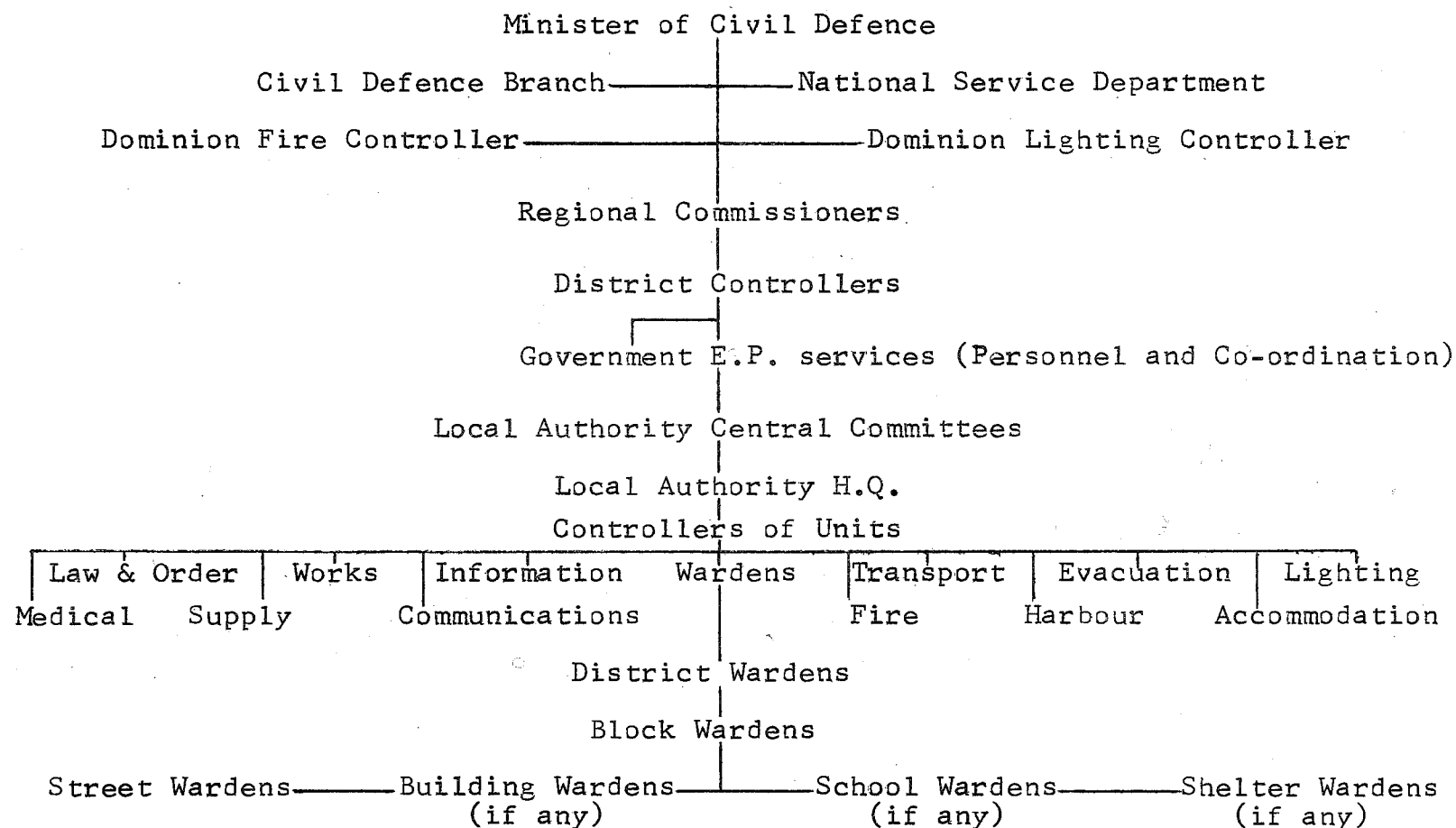
At the head of the E.P.S. was the Minister of Civil Defence, R.G. Semple,² who had jurisdiction over all Government civil

¹ Individual E.P.S. organisations were the responsibility of the local authorities, but as E.P.S. formed part of the Emergency Reserve Corps which was controlled by the military it was not at first clear who, in the last analysis, controlled the E.P.S. The question was raised in Parliament in 1941, and in an attempt to clarify the situation, the Minister of National Service, R.G. Semple stated:

The organisation is under Civil control ... It can be assumed that in the event of an enemy attack on a district which has no E.P.S., the military would take immediate control, but that, being assured of an efficient organisation to provide for the requirements of the Civil population, it would not take such action unless the scale of attack created a degree of confusion making such a course imperative. N.Z.P.D., Vol. 259, p. 100, 20 March, 1941.

² Semple also held the portfolio of National Service.

Figure I: THE WARTIME ORGANISATION OF CIVIL DEFENCE



Source: A.J.H.R., Report of the National Service Department, H.IIA, 1943, p.19.

defence activities, an arrangement similar to that in Britain. To facilitate the co-ordination of Government resources, E.P.S. sections were established within the individual departments both in Wellington and at district levels throughout the country.¹

The disbandment of the E.P.S.

As the Japanese threat to New Zealand rapidly diminished during the latter part of 1942 shelter construction was halted at the end of the year and civil defence operations were gradually scaled down.² In 1944 responsibility for civil defence was handed back to the Department of Internal Affairs, and at the end of the war most local E.P.S. organisations were disbanded, though a few reverted to their pre-war status.

Fortunately, the E.P.S. organisations throughout New Zealand were never put to the test by enemy action but on two occasions during the war they acted in their natural disaster role. In July and again in August 1942 Wellington and Masterton were severely shaken by earthquakes.³ Loss of life was, however, minimal, and the E.P.S. organisations in the two cities worked in conjunction with the public utilities and units of the armed forces to clear away rubble and demolish dangerous buildings.

The Local Authorities Emergency Powers Act

During the war New Zealand had developed what appeared to be a highly organised and co-ordinated civil defence organisation.

¹Those departments involved were Hospitals, Public Health, Railways, National Road Transport, the Broadcasting Commission and Electricity.

²At its peak of activity some 150,000 people had been involved with the E.P.S.

³For a brief account of these earthquakes see E.C. Grayland, New Zealand Disasters, pp. 147-154.

Yet, when new civil defence measures were introduced nine years later, the wartime experience was largely ignored.

In 1953 the Local Authorities Emergency Powers Bill was placed before Parliament. The Government appeared to be following the lead set by other countries, notably Britain and the United States, which had introduced civil defence legislation in 1948 and 1950 respectively, as a response to the latest development of military technology - atomic weapons.¹

The emergencies referred to in the Local Authorities Emergency Powers Bill were:

... earthquake, fire, flood, or other natural phenomenon,² or from action in time of war by enemy powers² or enemy sympathisers, which causes or is likely to cause in New Zealand large scale loss of or injury or damage to life, health, or property.³

While the Bill was concerned with the threat of both enemy attack and natural disaster, its timing suggested that the threat of attack was the primary motive for introduction. Furthermore, the legislation appeared two years after a civil emergency officer had been appointed to the Department of Internal Affairs following a recommendation from the Defence Council.

The Bill, which took the form of empowering legislation permitted local authorities 'at any time (whether during a period

¹ In Britain, the 1948 Civil Defence Act had perpetuated many features of wartime civil defence, though the office of Regional Commissioner was not re-established. The Act, which was basically empowering legislation placed overall responsibility for civil defence with the Home Secretary but gave individual ministers jurisdiction over certain aspects.

² 'Enemy powers' appeared to refer to the Soviet Union, which in 1953 had exploded its first atomic weapon.

³ New Zealand Statutes, The Local Authorities Emergency Powers Act, 1953, Section 2.

of emergency or otherwise)' to 'make arrangements' for the rescue of injured persons, clearing the streets of debris and providing accommodation and welfare facilities, etc.¹ To undertake these functions local authorities could appoint committees and controllers, establish emergency posts and provide training facilities. Financial assistance, if required, would be available from the Local Authorities Loan Board, but this was to be the only financial contribution by the Government.

Apart from the financial arrangements there were a number of other weaknesses in the legislation. The Bill did not make it mandatory for local authorities to set up emergency organisations, except in the case where the Minister of Internal Affairs issued written instructions during an emergency, or in the imminent threat of one. Also, there was no provision for legal requisitioning, and no sanctions to enforce compliance with local authority directives. Further, there was no provision for compensation for injury or death when carrying out emergency work.

Introducing the Bill into the House the Minister of Internal Affairs, W.A. Bodkin, stated:

The Bill seeks to provide the necessary machinery to enable local bodies to set up an organisation to meet the situation that would arise following national disasters such as an earthquake, or a flood, or any other national calamity. It in no way interferes with the Public Safety Conservation Act, because that measure's main objective is to prevent civil disorders and to ensure the preservation of law and order ... It sets up an organisation comparable with the E.P.S. organisation set up during the war ... Earthquake disasters do not affect the whole Dominion, so that a national organisation is not what is required at that time but more a local organisation that will act quickly in case of a disaster in its immediate locality.²

¹ Ibid., Section 3.

² N.Z.P.D., Vol. 300, p. 1855, 15 October, 1953.

As enemy action was specifically referred to in the Bill and had apparently been the primary motive for its introduction, the Minister's omission of any reference to the contingency was perhaps surprising, though it suggested that the Government considered such an event as unlikely. The Minister's speech was also noteworthy for its complacency and the inaccuracies it contained. The organisation envisaged in the Bill was in no way 'comparable with the E.P.S.' which had involved a co-ordinated central Government commitment to the local authorities. In this legislation the complete onus was placed on the local authorities - there was no central Government involvement. The Minister's claim that 'earthquake disasters do not affect the whole Dominion' was in opposition to scientific evidence.¹

The relationship between the Bill and the Public Safety Conservation Act was questioned by A.H. Nordmeyer for the Opposition. He argued that the former Act gave the police overall responsibility in a locality where an emergency occurred, if communications with the outside were cut off. He pointed out that under the new legislation the local authority would have complete power in an emergency.² The conflict, however, was not resolved when, with generally little interest being shown, the Bill passed onto the Statute Book.

Although the Local Authorities Emergency Powers Act placed the major responsibility for community safety on the local authorities, the Government also undertook its own separate emergency planning. A plan, Government action in a major emergency

¹ For a discussion of the earthquake problem in New Zealand, see Chapter V.

² N.Z.P.D., Vol. 300, p. 1857, 15 October, 1953.

(G.A.M.E.), consisting of standing instructions to be followed by various Government departments and personnel, was approved by Cabinet in April 1954.

In the plan the Post Office was responsible for informing the Government when a disaster occurred. Upon notification a Cabinet sub-committee and an operational centre would be established, and, if necessary, the Prime Minister or his nominee would lead a field committee to the scene of the disaster by whatever means possible.¹ Once on the scene, the committee would contact the Cabinet sub-committee, which was to be responsible for the mobilisation of Government resources.

The procedure detailed in the plan appears to have been cumbersome and over-centralised with Government assistance apparently being dependent on the ability of the field committee to leave Wellington. Furthermore, the procedure for calling in Government assistance seemed likely to incur considerable delays.

In the case of a disaster striking Wellington the plan provided for an emergency committee of Government district officers to be established in Auckland and responsible for bringing assistance to the capital.² This provision, having the appearance of a form of regional government, is of more than historical significance, for, as it will be shown, the idea of regional government during an emergency was often to be discussed in the 1960's but never acted upon.

¹ In addition to the Prime Minister or his nominee the committee was to include the Commissioner of Police and the Chiefs of the General and Air Staffs.

² The details of G.A.M.E. are taken from, Study Group of the N.Z. Institute of Public Administration, 'Organisation for Disaster', N.Z. Journal of Public Administration, Vol. 22, No. 1, Sept. 1959, pp. 59-60.

A retrospective view of civil defence during the 1950's was made in 1960 when the Deputy Director of Civil Defence stated:

The broad policy from 1953-58 in New Zealand emergency planning was to concentrate on major earthquakes and thereby cover most of the risks common in wartime attack. During that period people were thinking in terms of the atom bomb.¹

More to the point, it appeared that little thought was given to the problem of either an atomic attack or a major earthquake. It is doubtful if more than a few people knew of the existence of G.A.M.E. and the implementation of the Local Authorities Emergency Powers Act did not meet with much success. The response of the local authorities was 'at best sporadic'.²

Although the Local Authorities Emergency Powers Act and G.A.M.E. contained many limitations, they remained the basis of civil defence in New Zealand during the 1950's and into the 1960's, before the former was repealed by the Civil Defence Act in 1962, and the latter belatedly replaced by a new plan, Government Action in Major Disaster in 1966.

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Since the late 1920's New Zealand's vulnerability to natural disaster, particularly earthquakes, had been made only too obvious - Murchison 1929, Napier 1931, Wellington-Wairarapa 1942. Yet, with the exception of the war years, when the threat of a Japanese attack was the paramount concern, this country failed to appreciate the need for a permanent emergency organisation. The fact

¹Address to the Homeserviceman's Association. Reported in the Christchurch Star, 29 August 1960.

²Ministry of Civil Defence, Notes for Government Members (Wellington, 1968), p. 1.

that the Emergency Precautions Scheme was allowed to lapse at the end of the war and the inadequacy of the Local Authorities Emergency Powers Act in the post-war period both underlined New Zealand's failure to recognise the persistent danger of natural disaster. Not until the mid 1960's was a change in attitude evident.

* * *

CHAPTER II

RENEWED CONCERN: THE THREAT OF NUCLEAR ATTACK

After 1953 what interest there had been in civil defence disappeared. During the period 1953-58 no mention of the Local Authorities Emergency Powers Act was made in Parliament; the annual reports of the Department of Internal Affairs referred to it only once,¹ and the annual conferences of the Counties and Municipal Associations remained silent on the topic throughout.

The Ministry of Civil Defence

The question of civil defence was not raised again until 1958 when a section of the Government's White Paper, Review of Defence, called for the 'planning, preparation, training and public education for civil defence in war', and stated that a Ministry of Civil Defence would be established.

The need for civil defence was based on the reasoning that:

The safeguarding and educating of the civil population against the nuclear effects of war must, for the first time, become an essential part of national defence plans. The geographical position of New Zealand no longer affords the country security from the worst impact of global conflict. A nuclear war and the hazards to civilian population of radioactivity will not necessarily be confined to the countries of the main combatants. Radioactivity knows neither frontiers nor distance and the contamination of nuclear weapons could assume world wide proportions ... The defence plan must also take into account the possibility of a direct attack on this country with nuclear or non-nuclear weapons. Even a single submarine armed with guided missiles would offer a considerable threat to our shores.²

This reasoning was, however, qualified with the view that:

¹ A.J.H.R., Report of the Department of Internal Affairs, H.22, 1954, p. 14. The Act was referred to in a review of new legislation affecting local authorities.

² Ibid., Review of Defence, A.12, 1958, p. 15.

Civil defence planning is not related to any belief that a nuclear threat to New Zealand is imminent, but it is considered that we should have the foundations of such an organisation ready.¹

The proposals for civil defence may be seen as a reaction to rapidly developing military technology. During the previous five years, though particularly in 1957, there had been major advances in the development of nuclear weapons and their methods of delivery. In 1957 Russia and the United States had test-fired intercontinental ballistic missiles, Russia had launched the first satellite, and the U.S. was known to be building missile firing submarines. The development of these new delivery systems meant that New Zealand's isolated geographical position no longer provided it with what had hitherto been virtual immunity from nuclear attack.

The 1958 Defence Review, however, gave no indication that New Zealand was even a potential nuclear target. The underlying assumption behind the White Paper seems to have been that although the chances of an attack on New Zealand were remote, its geographical isolation did not obviate a pre-emptive nuclear strike.

As the main issue of the 1958 White Paper was the abolition of compulsory military service, the civil defence proposals passed virtually unnoticed in Parliament and the press. Because of its controversial content, the Opposition charged the Government with deliberately delaying the publication of the White Paper until after the annual conference of the Returned Servicemen's Association (R.S.A.) at Wellington in June 1958.² At the

¹ Ibid., p. 16.

² For Opposition accusations of the Government delaying the publication of the White Paper, see N.Z.P.D., Vol. 316, p. 366, 2 July, 1958.

conference, however, a call was made for the establishment of a civil defence organisation.¹ Whether this move on the part of the R.S.A. was pure coincidence or the result of 'leaked' information is a matter of conjecture, but by publicising the need for civil defence the conference provided the Government with an opportune time to release the White Paper. Yet, when it was eventually debated in the 1958 Parliament no mention was made of civil defence - a minor issue compared with the politics of military service.

Parliament: Reaction

If little interest was shown in the civil defence proposals contained in the White Paper, this was equally true of the establishment of the Ministry of Civil Defence as a branch of the Department of Internal Affairs on 6 April 1959. Parliament was not in session at the time and when the House resumed in June the new Ministry was an established fact, and within the wider context of the issues before Parliament, civil defence generated only passing interest.

The Minister of Finance, A.H. Nordmeyer, made the first statement to Parliament on civil defence policy in October, when he stated:

It was hoped to have a much more effective system of civil defence which could operate not only in the event of war but also in event of an earthquake or other major disaster.²

It had now become apparent that the original rationale for civil defence had been extended. This was in keeping with previous

¹ For a report of the R.S.A. conference, see Evening Post, Wellington, 19 June, 1958.

² N.Z.P.D., Vol. 321, p. 2398, 13 October, 1959.

civil defence measures, introduced primarily in response to defence considerations then, almost as an afterthought, extended to cover natural disaster.

As a reflection of the limited interest in civil defence, it was not until July 1960 that a full debate on the subject took place. At this point the Minister of Defence, P.G. Connelly, took it upon himself to inform the House of the need for protection against nuclear attack, although the civil defence portfolio was, in fact, the responsibility of the Minister of Internal Affairs, W.T. Anderton. Connelly informed the House that a Soviet intercontinental ballistic missile test fired across the Pacific in 1958:

was only 1.4 miles off its target at the end of 7,760 miles ... Fired from any of the countries of South East Asia it could have blown Auckland to pieces.

Interjection: Hon. R.M. Algie, Why not Dunedin?

Connelly: Because Dunedin is of no military significance. The destruction of Auckland would mean the major destruction of the three arms of our services. Had the missile been fired from eastern Russia, China, Korea, Formosa, Thailand, Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, it would have hit almost any city in New Zealand. The development of nuclear submarines is another factor. We have been advised that by next year the three major navies of the world will have submarines capable of standing 1,500 miles offshore and, while submerged, firing a missile to hit a target on land ... We should let the people know what they should do in matters of civil defence against the attacks which could be launched on this country in the way I have mentioned.¹

The Opposition appeared to be in sympathy with the Government on the need for civil defence but attacked it for the delay in implementing a scheme. W.B. Tennant (Manawatu) pointed out that:

While we talk in hushed and subdued tones about the possibility of atomic warfare - apparently we are not supposed to

¹ Ibid., Vol. 322, pp. 213-14, 1 July, 1960.

talk about this in public - every white country in the British Commonwealth is preparing and has in fact in most cases implemented preparations for such a (civil defence) scheme.¹

He noted that Connelly's speech:

highlights the need for something to be done in the matter of civil defence. If the situation does not warrant the setting up of such an organisation, then why did the Government twelve months ago write to every local body asking for the setting up of a civil defence organisation? If the situation internally or internationally warrants the establishment of the organisation - as the Government evidently believes it does - then the Government should accept its responsibility to give the necessary leadership, leadership which is at present pitifully absent.²

The Government was certainly open to criticism as its approach to civil defence betrayed a lack of serious intent. The Ministry had been established thirteen months before, yet, in that time it had remained little more than a creation on paper; progress in implementing a civil defence scheme had been non-existent. There was not even any clear indication of the format the organisation would take, and conflicting ministerial statements on the purpose of civil defence indicated the absence of a coherent policy. In fact, it was not until October 1960 that the Minister gave an account of civil defence policy in the House. In the course of his speech Anderton explained that officers of his Department:

were concentrating on the danger of earthquakes which was as important as any other danger ... It seemed unwise to him to concentrate efforts against the possibility of nuclear attack, but if there should be such an attack the most important thing was to guard against the dangers of fall-out rather than blast.³

¹ Ibid., p. 410, 7 July, 1960.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., Vol. 324, p. 2732, 4 October, 1960.

This statement appeared in conflict with that made by the Minister of Defence in July. In fact, there seemed to be considerable confusion in Anderton's mind about the current civil defence policy. He was clearly labouring under difficulties, particularly as his Ministry was not yet in a position to offer him expert advice. When this did become available much of it was contrary to information initially made public by the Minister.

Local government reaction to the new civil defence proposals

The civil defence proposals of 1958 appear to have passed unnoticed by the local authorities, and not until 1961 was there any significant discussion on the topic. In the light of the new developments it was rather surprising that the only interest shown in the Local Authorities Emergency Powers Act came after the new scheme for civil defence had been proposed. At the 1959 conference of the Municipal Association¹ a remit was put forward by the Wellington City Council requesting the Government to pay compensation from the funds of the Earthquake and War Damage Commission to any person injured during the operations of a local authority emergency organisation.² The remit was carried by the conference but rejected by the Department of Internal Affairs on

¹The Municipal Association along with the Counties Association represent the interests of all the territorial local authorities in the country. Both Associations meet annually to discuss matters affecting local government and to consider remits from individual local authorities - most of which are requests to the Government seeking changes to legislation affecting their operation. The day to day running of the Associations is the responsibility of permanent secretaries and relations with central Government are well developed. Access to Ministers is well defined and both Associations are represented on the many Government committees and agencies concerned with local body administration.

²New Zealand Municipal Association, Proceedings of the Forty-sixth Conference, 1959, p. 90.

the grounds that:

The general policy of the Government is that the cost of civil defence schemes at the local level should be borne by the local authorities ... The purpose of the Earthquake and War Damage Fund is to provide a means whereby property can be reinstated, whereas the primary purpose of civil defence is to protect persons.¹

The Wellington remit was the first of a long series of similar remits to be put to successive conferences requesting financial assistance from the Government for civil defence, and one of a number which mistakenly considered the Earthquake and War Damage Commission as a source of funds.

The Minister of Civil Defence made good use of the platform provided for him at the annual conferences of the Municipal and Counties Associations to expound the purpose of civil defence and the structure of the proposed organisation. One of the earliest ministerial pronouncements was made to the Counties Association in June 1959. In discussing the concept of civil defence the Minister commented:

No one here, I am sure, will misunderstand the meaning of the word defence in this context. It has no military aspect and does not mean meeting an invading force on the beaches or in the streets as the Home Guard was ready to do during the war. It means defence of the civil population in a protective sense, and is really a modernised version of the E.P.S. as we knew it in those dreadful days.²

The Minister went on to say:

I would not like you to imagine that this is an entirely new venture and that we have come to it rather belatedly. We have had a civil emergency scheme for quite a few years now. It came into being with the Local Authorities Emergency

¹ Minister of Internal Affairs to the Secretary of the Municipal Association, Letter, 10 February, 1960.

² New Zealand Counties Association, Proceedings of the Thirty-fourth Conference, 1959, p. 21.

Powers Act of 1953, and my Department then prepared a scheme for coping with major emergencies from natural causes such as earthquakes, fires, tornadoes ... The civil defence scheme will not be separate and distinct from the civil emergency scheme. In fact, the two will be merged into one to produce a single scheme of civil defence against eventualities of all kinds. Consequently all the preparations will be geared to the wartime situation but they will nevertheless, be usable in any lesser emergency.¹

The Minister's statement indicated that the primary concern of civil defence was to be with wartime emergency. He also stressed to the Counties Association the importance of local authority participation in civil defence:

The scheme will be developed through two agencies closely linked together. (Firstly), the Ministry of Civil Defence controlled by the Minister working through the Director of Civil Defence in the usual way. (Secondly), a civil defence corps operating in local units organised by the local bodies concerned, and supported by the local police and fire services.²

At this stage, the regional element of the organisation appeared not to have been finalised, though applications for Regional Commissioners were called for within two months.

In December 1959, the Minister informed the Municipal Association that:

At the local level the obligation is on the local authorities to organise operationally for the protection of their local populations and power to do this is given in the Local Authorities Emergency Powers Act. The Government feels that the local authorities should bear the costs of establishing operational units, and past experience has shown that those which have organised Emergency Precautions Schemes have not been involved in any great expenditure.³

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., p. 22.

³ Minister of Civil Defence to Secretary of the Municipal Association, Letter, 16 December, 1959. This letter was the result of representations made to the Minister concerning the financing of the civil defence scheme.

The importance of local authority participation in civil defence was being stressed to a degree which they were unprepared to tolerate, and which, at a later date, led them to demand a co-ordinated central Government commitment to civil defence. The Minister's remarks about 'expenditure' left the local authorities unconvinced, and critical of the proposed method for financing local organisations. Moreover, the emphasis placed on nuclear warfare led some members of the Municipal Association to expound the view that civil defence was a national matter and as such the costs of a protection scheme should be met by the Government.

The greater problem was, however, the Government's failure to inform the local authorities of their specific responsibilities. In September 1959 a pamphlet had been distributed by the Ministry outlining proposals for the civil defence scheme, but they were only of a general nature. Not until late in 1960 was the Ministry able to provide more detailed proposals, but again generalities were emphasised rather than specifics.¹

In the eighteen months following the establishment of the Ministry of Civil Defence the local authorities were justifiably critical of Government inactivity. The Minister's address to the Municipal Association in 1960 may be seen as an attempt to counter criticism of Government inaction:

I should mention that there need be no emotional propaganda that could create a fear complex with the public, but if civil defence schemes are developed gradually and effectively in line with the proposals promulgated much will have been achieved.²

¹For details of these proposals see Chapter IV, pp. 60-63.

²New Zealand Municipal Association, Proceedings of the Forty-seventh Conference, 1960, p. 11.

'Gradually' was very much the operative word, in view of the negligible progress being made. At the same conference, the President of the Municipal Association voiced his concern at the slow progress and the lack of definite proposals, particularly financial, when he reviewed the situation:

The Government has called for applications for positions of Regional Directors (Commissioners). Apart from this, however, there is no indication that the Government is meeting the cost, or any substantial part of the cost, of any such civil defence scheme, and it would appear that the Government is looking to the local authorities to meet the costs involved. This matter has been taken up with the Minister of Civil Defence since it is considered that it is a national matter upon which the Government should give some definite lead insofar as costs are concerned.¹

The representations to the Minister failed as the Government considered the responsibility for underwriting the cost of civil defence schemes rested with the local authorities. The Government had appropriated £10,000 for civil defence during the 1959 session of Parliament and the Minister considered this to be a 'not inconsiderable financial contribution by Government'.² This money was, however, for establishing the Ministry of Civil Defence, the appointment of Regional Commissioners and for training purposes.

With the return of the National Party to power in November 1960, F.L.A. Gotz was appointed Minister of Civil Defence. There was, however, no discernible change in the new Government's approach to civil defence. In his first address to the Municipal Association in 1961 the Minister reiterated much of what his

¹ Ibid., pp. 28-9.

² Minister of Civil Defence to the Secretary of the Municipal Association, Letter, 16 December, 1959.

Labour predecessor had said, but added a new list of horrors which could strike the nation. Anderton's plea to the same Association the previous year, not to create a 'fear complex' went unheeded as the Minister pointed out that:

(Civil defence) is to inform the people of the dangers that can exist in a world moving as fast as ours is today, to protect them from toxic gases, nuclear fall-out, from poisons, from epidemics, from plagues - not that we expect these things, we do not; but we cannot lose sight of the fact that weapons of unspeakable horror exist in the world today and we have a duty to safeguard our people ... So long as such weapons exist and the occasional earthquake still occurs then so long must we be prepared to guard against the effects of these things ... I wish (civil defence) were not necessary, but it is necessary, even as a protection against earthquakes and devastating floods. Just as it is our duty to guard against them, so it is our duty, no less, to guard against potential dangers which can come from the skies.¹

In contrast to Gotz's emotional rhetoric, his deprecating attitude towards, and failure to emphasise the known danger of natural disaster in New Zealand, the delegates to the conference took a more realistic view of the situation when a remit was put forward proposing that:

All preliminary investigations concerning the civil defence and disaster scheme be carried out on a national basis and that when such research is completed local authorities be delegated power to implement the proposals brought forward by the national body.²

The underlying concern of the remit was financial, and a rider attached considered that an expensive disaster scheme might be unwarranted if preliminary research were carried out. If such a scheme were required, however, it was suggested that methods of combatting different types of disasters should be known.

¹ New Zealand Municipal Association, Proceedings of the Forty-eighth Conference, 1961, pp. 11-12.

² Ibid., p. 91.

At the 1962 conference of the Municipal Association some delegates expressed misgivings about the way in which civil defence was being approached. One considered that:

the whole thing had been bungled. The very term civil defence suggested something of a military nature, and the local bodies did not want anything to do with something that savoured of being the fourth arm of the defence forces.¹

Another expressed the widely held view that 'they should forget about atomic fall-out and should set about organising small flying squads for flood, search and rescue, fire and earthquake'.² The Mayor of Wellington, F. Kitts, saw the central direction of civil defence as an attack on local authority autonomy. He said:

The matter should be handled by the local authorities themselves. If it is passed to the Government, a further weakening of local control would ensue, with a lessening in the autonomy of local bodies.³

Although there was no opposition to the principle of civil defence a general lack of interest in the scheme was evident. The President effectively summed up the attitude of the local authorities when he said:

The organisation of local schemes still appears to be lagging and there does not appear to be any great enthusiasm on the part of our members to commit their local authorities ... It does appear that the local authorities expect a greater lead from the Government than has so far been given.⁴

The passing of the Civil Defence Act later in the year, important

¹ New Zealand Municipal Association, Proceedings of the Forty-ninth Conference, 1962, pp. 92-3.

² Ibid., p. 92.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 20.

as it was, did not provide the necessary 'lead' for local authority planning, and not until 1963 was the Ministry in a position to do this. Financial assistance was not forthcoming until 1966.

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The civil defence proposals in the 1958 Defence White Paper appeared as a rather startled reaction to rapidly changing military technology, with Soviet rocket testing in the Pacific having brought the new developments uncomfortably close to home. The reasoning behind the White Paper was, however, too hypothetical to incur criticism, and anyway, there was always the escape clause, 'Civil defence planning is not related to any belief that a nuclear threat to New Zealand is imminent'.¹

Although the White Paper may now, with twelve years hindsight, be regarded as perhaps an over-reaction to an undefined threat, it must be remembered that the late 1950's were the beginning of a new era in weaponry, with its associated vocabulary of I.C.B.M.'s, nuclear deterrents, massive retaliation and the like. Those who observed the developments saw a threat to New Zealand. The Dunedin Evening Star in July 1960 commented in an editorial:

New Zealanders would be foolish to assume that in the event of a third world war the remoteness of their country from the major storm centers would be a guarantee of security against enemy attack. In this nuclear age most parts of the earth's surface are vulnerable to sudden onslaught, and since the Dominion would automatically become involved in any conflict engaging the British Commonwealth and the United States, it follows that our people must be prepared

¹ A.J.H.R., Review of Defence, A.12, 1958, p. 16.

to defend themselves in time of emergency.¹

As New Zealand is a nation of very limited military and strategic significance, discussion of the country's potential as a nuclear target must necessarily be speculative.² In 1958, however, the Labour Government did consider there was a threat, though remote, and New Zealand should therefore be prepared. Yet the delay in implementing a civil defence scheme after the publication of the White Paper raised doubts as to how seriously the Government viewed the threat.

Had the Department of Defence perhaps given greater prior consideration to the requirements of a civil defence scheme before responsibility for implementation was transferred to the new Ministry of Civil Defence, the completion of detailed proposals may have been possible at an earlier date. But, the Government, assisted by the emotive rhetoric of some of its ministers, laid itself open to criticism on the grounds that if it took the

¹ Evening Star, Dunedin, 28 July, 1960.

² For a speculative discussion see W. David McIntyre, Britain, New Zealand and the Security of South East Asia in the 1970s (Wellington, N.Z. Institute of International Affairs, 1969), pp. 27-28. Here the author utilises an argument of Liddell-Hart in discussing a stance of neutralism or non-alignment for New Zealand. Liddell-Hart has suggested that a small ally of a nation possessing nuclear weapons could be used as a 'nuclear hostage' in a dispute with another nuclear power. The strategy would permit the belligerent power to demonstrate its nuclear capability without engaging in a direct confrontation with the other nuclear power. The hopeful result of the strategy could be the settlement of the dispute without full scale nuclear war, and with the loss only of an 'expendable ally'. Such a 'theory', of course, defeats the purpose of alliances.

Should New Zealand at any time contain significant military installations the position could be changed. It has been argued that the American submarine navigation station in North West Australia constitutes a potential nuclear target. See J.G. Starke, The ANZUS Treaty Alliance (Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1965), p. 223.

problem seriously, then, 'why was it not doing something about it?'

The Ministry was not, however, in a position to begin implementing a civil defence scheme until after Regional Commissioners were appointed in June 1960. Until that time, the Ministry had remained little more than a paper creation since its establishment thirteen months before.

The disturbing, though almost predictable, feature of the renewed interest in civil defence was the extent to which it had been motivated almost solely by the hypothetical threat of nuclear attack and not by reference to the known threat of natural disaster. Although it was envisaged that the proposed organisation would fulfil a dual function, the initial emphasis on the threat of nuclear attack prevailed until 1964. At that time, as a later chapter will show, the threat was deemed to exist no longer and belatedly the rationale for civil defence became the country's vulnerability to natural disaster. But this is to anticipate the discussion. The most immediate demand in 1960 was to provide a legislative basis on which the new organisation could be established.

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CHAPTER III

LEGISLATION: THE CIVIL DEFENCE ACT, 1962

The establishment of the Ministry of Civil Defence¹ in April 1959 did not require any major reorganisation with the Government or the Public Service. The decision to incorporate the new Ministry in the Department of Internal Affairs² appears to have been based on the Department's historical responsibility for local government, and its administration of previous civil defence schemes.

The Government did not appoint new staff to the Ministry, but decided that civil defence positions would be held in conjunction with those of the Department of Internal Affairs. Consequently the Secretary of the Department took the additional title of Director of Civil Defence and an Assistant Secretary became Deputy Director. The absence of staff permanently responsible for civil defence at the national level was not altered until 1965 when a full-time Director was appointed.

One of the earliest decisions made by the Ministry, and one which was to largely determine the structure of the civil defence

¹The designation ministry, rather than department, was in response to the anticipated role of the Ministry in co-ordinating those Government departments involved with civil defence. It is interesting to note that during the National Administrations of the 1960's the designation Ministry had been used to signify a co-ordinating function in cases of department amalgamation, for example, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Transport. Notwithstanding the co-ordinating functions of the Ministry of Civil Defence it retains a rather unique character as a ministry within a department.

²The Department of Internal Affairs is a general purpose department responsible for a multitude of activities ranging from the issuing of passports and raffle licences to the protection of wildlife. In the capacity of Ministry for Local Government the Department also has a general purview over local authority affairs.

organisation, was advertising for Regional Commissioners.¹ The original intention had been to have four, but only three were appointed.² They were men of considerable standing; Brigadier J.T. Burrows and Commodore P. Bourke were retired military officers, and Sir Geoffrey Peren, a retired academic.³

As well as being responsible for the development of civil defence within their own regions, the Regional Commissioners were to take a major part in the decision-making process within the Ministry. The most important component of this process was a conference, held every two to three months in Wellington.⁴ The conferences, usually chaired by the Deputy Director of Civil Defence (Assistant Secretary of Internal Affairs) were attended on a regular basis by the Regional Commissioners, periodically by the Director (Secretary of Internal Affairs) and occasionally by the Minister.

Until the appointment of a full-time Director the conferences tended to be very informal with discussion often diverging widely

¹ The terms of employment for the Regional Commissioners were part-time, requiring a minimum of twenty hours per week. Initially it was envisaged that more time would be required then diminishing as civil defence developed. Details of employment taken from the New Zealand Herald, Auckland, 24 August, 1959.

² It had initially been intended to create four regions, two in each Island. But with the appointment of only three Regional Commissioners the South Island became a single region. I was informed by the former Director of Civil Defence, Brigadier R.C. Queree, that the decision to revert to three regions was because of the absence of Internal Affairs Department representation in Dunedin. (Interview: Wellington, 2 September, 1969.) It would seem, however, that the main reason was the inability to obtain a fourth Regional Commissioner.

³ Burrows was appointed to the Southern Region based on Christchurch. Bourke was appointed to the Northern Region based on Auckland. Peren was appointed to the Central Region based on Palmerston North.

⁴ The reports of these conferences will be cited in footnotes as H[ead] O[ffice] C[onference] R[eports], Month, Year.

from the agenda. After 1965 they lost a degree of their informality, and some of their importance as a body, when it became apparent that more decisions were being taken independently at the Directorate level. To some extent, this was understandable as the conferences did not have a defined role within the administrative structure of the Ministry. In fact, many of the topics considered at the conferences, after the passage of the Civil Defence Act in 1962, should have been, in theory, the responsibility of the national civil defence committee (N.C.D.C.) which was set up by the Act.¹ But the N.C.D.C. did not meet until February 1964, and then in rather embarrassing circumstances.²

The first conference was held in June 1960 following the appointment of the three Regional Commissioners. This was two years after the publication of the 1958 Defence Review and fifteen months since the establishment of the Ministry. This delay led to the conclusion in the previous chapter which questioned the degree of Government concern for the threat outlined in the White Paper. Furthermore, it also illustrated the extent to which the Ministry of Civil Defence had remained little more than a paper creation, prior to the appointment of the Regional Commissioners.

Following the first conference,³ the Regional Commissioners returned to their regions to publicise the importance of civil defence to the local authorities and obtain from them a commitment

¹For details of the committee composition and functions see Chapter III, p. 40.

²For details see Chapter VI, pp. 100-103.

³The June conference was almost wholly concerned with defining the functions of the Regional Commissioners. For details see Chapter VI, p. 95.

in principle to the scheme. From the discussions, it was made readily apparent to the Regional Commissioners that the proposed organisation required a co-ordinated central Government commitment and legislative definition. The point was well made, for the Department of Internal Affairs commented in 1961 that:

Those local authorities which are anxious to play their full part in civil defence planning, and the Ministry itself, are handicapped by a lack of legislative definition of the role of central Government in this field.¹

The Director had briefly raised the topic of legislation in June 1960 when he informed the Regional Commissioners that as the Ministry did not have any statutory directive powers, legislation would be required.² At first it appeared that the inadequate Local Authorities Emergency Powers Act would be resurrected but it was soon realised that a new approach was imperative.³ The result was the Civil Defence Bill which gave legislative definition to an organisation designed to command and co-ordinate resources in case of hostile attack or natural disaster.

The Civil Defence Bill 1962

The Civil Defence Bill,⁴ passed by Parliament in December

¹ A.J.H.R., Report of the Department of Internal Affairs, H.22, 1961, p. 44.

² H.O.C.R., June 1960.

³ During their discussions with the local authorities the Regional Commissioners advised those wishing to establish civil defence organisations that they had power to do so under the Local Authorities Emergency Powers Act. The Minister of Civil Defence also made a similar reference to the Act when he addressed the Municipal Association in 1959. See Chapter II, p. 28.

⁴ All references to the Civil Defence Act, 1962, are to the Reprinted Act, April, 1969 which incorporates the principal Act and amendments of 1965, 1967 and 1968. Unless otherwise stated references to the principal Act will be given as Civil Defence Act, 1962.

1962, was a substantial piece of legislation containing over fifty clauses in five parts: Administration, Civil Defence Regions, Declaration of National Emergency or of a State of Major Disaster,¹ Duties and Powers of Local Authorities, Miscellaneous.

Administration

This section of the Bill detailed the role of the Director of Civil Defence in both his administrative and operational capacities. In the former role he was to be responsible for advising and assisting the Minister and the local authorities. In a national emergency or a state of major disaster, he was to be responsible for:

Co-ordinating the use of ... the personnel, material and services made available by Departments of State, other Government agencies, statutory corporations, public bodies, other organisations, and otherwise for the purpose of civil defence ... 2

Provision was made for a national civil defence committee. This committee was to consist of the heads of a number of Government departments and agencies,³ with its general function being:

To advise and assist the Minister and Director in the planning and implementation of all measures considered necessary or desirable for the establishment, maintenance, and effective operation of civil defence.⁴

¹ The term 'major disaster' was replaced in the principal Act with the term 'civil defence emergency' by the Civil Defence Amendment Act, 1968.

² Civil Defence Act, 1962, s8, subss3.

³ Permanent members of the committee include, the Director of Civil Defence, Commissioner of Police, Commissioner of Works, Secretary for Transport, Chief of the Defence Staff, Director-General of Health, Director-General of the Post Office, General Manager of Railways, Chairman of the Social Security Commission, Secretary of Industries and Commerce, Director-General of Broadcasting. Other persons may be appointed from time to time - Ibid., s10, subss2.

⁴ Ibid., s11, subss1.

A further section made provision for planning committees. Where they produced plans which involved Government departments or agencies it was mandatory for them to carry out the requirements imposed.

Civil Defence Regions

Under this heading the Bill gave legislative definition to the regional approach to civil defence, and detailed the powers and functions of the Regional Commissioners. Their role was to be similar to that of the Director, involving both administrative and operational functions. They were to be responsible for assisting the local authorities generally in the preparation of civil defence plans, and co-ordinating resources in time of disaster or emergency. To facilitate co-ordination regional civil defence committees were established, their functions being:

To assist the Regional Commissioners to plan the use of, co-ordinate, and use for the purposes of this Act, personnel, material, and services made available within the region ... by Departments of State, other Government agencies, statutory corporations, public bodies, other organisations, or otherwise.¹

Declaration of National Emergency or of a State of Major Disaster

This section of the Bill embodied the dual purpose of civil defence. Provision was made for the Executive Council, with or without the Governor-General, and for the Prime Minister to declare a state of national emergency which was defined as:

An emergency due to an actual or imminent attack on New Zealand by an enemy, or to any actual or imminent warlike act whether directed against New Zealand or not, whereby loss of life or injury or distress to persons or danger to the safety of the public is caused or threatened to be

¹ Ibid., s20, subss3.

caused in New Zealand, or any part of New Zealand.¹

Section 22 gave the Minister of Civil Defence power to declare states of national or regional major disaster; a major disaster being:

Any fire, explosion, earthquake, eruption, seismic sea wave, flood, storm, tornado, or other happening (not attributable to an attack by an enemy or to any warlike act) ... ²

The chairman or civil defence controller of a local authority was empowered to declare a state of local major disaster if a state of major disaster had not been declared, and the Regional Commissioners were empowered to declare states of regional major disaster. States of both emergency and disaster were to last for twenty-eight days and could be extended.

Duties and Powers of Local Authorities

A provision in this part of the Bill stated that 'every local authority shall prepare a local civil defence plan', which was to be submitted to the Regional Commissioners for approval.³

Provision was also made for local authorities to unite for civil defence purposes. When states of emergency or disaster were declared the local authorities were empowered to undertake activities ranging from the clearing of streets to 'the relief of distress and for welfare generally'.⁴ If local authority personnel were unable to carry out any of these activities, responsibility would then rest with the senior officer of the police in the locality.

¹ Ibid., s2.

² Ibid., s2.

³ Ibid., s27, subss1.

⁴ Ibid., s38, subss1.

If the magnitude of the disaster or emergency appeared to be beyond the local authority's ability to cope, it could 'call upon the Regional Commissioner to take such steps as he considers necessary or desirable'.¹ The local authority would then exercise powers under the 'direction of the Regional Commissioner'.²

The remainder of this section of the Bill dealt with pensions and compensation for persons suffering death and injury, as well as damage to or loss of property during a state of emergency or disaster. These provisions, however, only applied to civil defence personnel and only during the period the declaration remained in force. Under section 44 pensions in respect to death or disablement would be provided by the Government under the War Pensions Act but only for a period of twelve months following the enactment of the Civil Defence Bill. After that time the provision would apply only to those local authorities which had 'established a civil defence organisation'.³

For those local authorities who wished to borrow money for civil defence purposes, finance would be available from the Local Authorities Loans Board.

Miscellaneous

Incorporated in this section were a number of minor provisions which included the protection of civil defence personnel from liability, requisitioning powers for local authorities,

¹ Ibid., s39, subss1.

² Ibid.

³ New Zealand Statutes, Civil Defence Bill, New Zealand Parliamentary Bills, passed and lapsed. Nos. 1-60, 1962.

powers for the evacuation of buildings, provision for civil defence police, and penalties for offences committed against the Act.

The Governor-General was empowered to make regulations 'for the purpose of securing the public safety and generally safeguarding the interests of the public during any state of national emergency or of major disaster'.¹ Finally, the Act amended the Public Safety Conservation Act of 1932 to avoid any conflict, and repealed the Local Authorities Emergency Powers Act of 1953.

The Civil Defence Bill gave legislative definition to an organisation based on a three-tier structure; national, regional and local, a pattern resembling the wartime Emergency Precautions Scheme.

While the Bill placed the primary responsibility for the safety of the community on the local authorities, they were to be assisted by a co-ordinated system of Government support. In the case of a localised natural disaster the local authority in the area would be responsible for carrying out civil defence operations, but if unable to cope, regional and national assistance could be called upon. Where a hostile attack or major natural disaster occurred the regional headquarters and the local organisations would be placed under the direction of the national headquarters. In both cases, however, something more than a legislative definition of functions was required - a detailed plan of Government action was necessary, though one was not forthcoming until 1965.

¹ Civil Defence Act, 1962, s55, subss1.

The Civil Defence Bill and the legislative process

The Civil Defence Bill passed by Parliament at the end of 1962 differed in a number of respects from the original draft Bill which was first submitted to the Regional Commissioners for their comments in October 1960. Two officers of the Department of Internal Affairs, P.J. O'Dea and B.D. Crompton, were responsible for drafting the legislation, a task carried out with considerable speed. One change requested by the Regional Commissioners at the October conference was that reference to property in the Bill be removed, as civil defence, they argued, was only for the protection of people. They also asked for an extra clause to be inserted giving the local authorities some powers of requisitioning. It was also considered that civil defence planning by the local authorities should be made as nearly mandatory as possible without actually directing them. This, it was agreed, could be achieved by the use of the word 'responsibility'.¹ However, when the Bill finally became law the requirement was that local authorities 'shall' plan for civil defence.²

On more than one occasion the Ministry exhibited a marked degree of caution in making mandatory demands on the local authorities, probably not wishing to jeopardise the good relations which existed between the Ministry and the local government Associations.

The next conference in May 1961 was called for the express purpose of discussing legislation but, unfortunately, little of it

¹H.O.C.R., October, 1960.

²Civil Defence Act 1962, s27, subss1.

was recorded. This was particularly disappointing as it dealt with the extraordinary powers to be exercised by the Government in states of national emergency and major disaster. It was decided that clauses should be inserted in the Bill empowering the Government to make regulations, but without detailing their actual scope. The decision to handle the matter in this way was taken to avoid delays while the regulations were being discussed with the relevant departments.¹ Unfortunately, the urgency taken with the Bill was to no avail as it was placed on priority '2' of the Government's legislative programme.

In July 1961 the Director informed the Regional Commissioners that the Bill had received a clearance from the Cabinet legislation committee and was to go to the law draftsman. He also informed them that the Minister was making representations to Cabinet in an attempt to get a higher priority for the Bill. Although the Director hoped to see it go forward, he noted that the time factor and the heavy legislative programme might require revision of the Bill in order to leave out any 'contentious provisions'.² The nature of these provisions is not known, though it may be assumed they related to the undefined extraordinary Government powers and the provisions for local authority requisitioning.

The Civil Defence Bill was introduced into Parliament by the Minister of Civil Defence on 10 November 1961. He expressed the hope that, 'by next session local authorities and all other organisations and persons involved will have given the Bill

¹ H.O.C.R., May, 1961.

² Ibid., July, 1961.

earnest consideration and made their views known to us'.¹ The Prime Minister, K.J. Holyoake, however, turned down an Opposition request for a recess committee to study the Bill, and eight months were to elapse before it returned to the House.

Local authority reaction to the Bill

Earlier in 1961 the draft Bill had been circulated to the local authorities for comment. At the annual conference of the Municipal Association in 1962, its Secretary questioned certain inadequacies in the Bill. He noted that there was no fixed date for the completion of civil defence plans, and no provision requiring local authorities to advise residents of the contents of the plans. This, he said, might hinder the actions of the civil defence organisations in time of crisis. He also noted that the Bill did not make provision for the holding of regular practices, and questioned two sections, 43 and 48, which he felt needed further study. The first section dealt with accident insurance and the other with compensation for requisitioned equipment.²

The Secretary's comments, which were later submitted to the Department of Internal Affairs, showed that the executive of the Municipal Association was not concerned about having mandatory provisions imposed upon its members, particularly in relation to the preparation of plans. This was in contrast to the view taken within the Ministry where it was felt that mandatory provisions should be avoided.

¹N.Z.P.D., Vol. 329, p. 3496, 10 November, 1961.

²New Zealand Municipal Association, Proceedings of the Forty-ninth Conference, 1962, p. 91.

In November 1961 the Regional Commissioners reported that the general reaction to the Bill had been favourable at Council meetings although some local authorities had not studied the Bill, and others had not seen it.¹

The second draft of the Bill

In May 1962 the Director announced a major addition to the Bill, the provision for a national civil defence committee (N.C.D.C.). He mentioned that in its earlier form the Bill 'had not correctly associated theory and practice'.² The decision to create the committee was based on the consideration that permanent heads of certain important departments would automatically be involved in any form of emergency. This had not been given recognition in the first draft of the Bill which had placed all powers with the Director of Civil Defence. Essentially, the new committee meant the concept of the regional civil defence committee would be duplicated at the national level. The Director considered there were a number of advantages in having the new committee. Firstly, decisions reached by the Cabinet in relation to emergencies and disasters could be enforced immediately by direction from the permanent heads concerned. Also the deliberations of Cabinet would be assisted as the Ministers would have their advisers close at hand. Secondly, general discussions on civil defence would be better informed if the permanent heads had a good knowledge of the subject. The N.C.D.C., the Director, said, would act as a top

¹ H.O.C.R., November, 1961.

² Ibid., May, 1962.

level policy group, advising the Government on civil defence matters.¹

P.J. O'Dea also explained that the Bill established a limited role for central Government in civil defence, a role basically to 'assist and advise'.² The N.C.D.C., he added, had been named a committee to avoid 'offending sensibilities'.³

The remainder of the May conference was given to a detailed discussion of the Bill's individual sections, and in particular section 44. As the section stood there was no local authority liability in the case of the demise or injury of a civil defence worker. It was considered that personnel could be given protection under the War Pensions Act, but although this provision was made, the section was to be substantially amended by the Local Bills Committee when the legislation was returned to Parliament.

Three months later the co-drafter of the Bill, B.D. Crompton, informed the Regional Commissioners of the Bill's acceptance by Cabinet after returning from the law draftsman. It would then be discussed at Caucus, reintroduced to the House and then referred to the Local Bills Committee. The committee, he said, could amend the Bill considerably but the Minister and officers of the Department would endeavour to retain it unaltered.⁴

The conference then proceeded to discuss further changes which had been made to the Bill. Crompton advised that the power

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., July, 1962.

for requisitioning aircraft had been deleted because of strong opposition from the Ministry of Civil Aviation. He also informed the Regional Commissioners that they would not be given powers to impound vehicles or equipment for possible use in civil defence. Their powers would only allow them to take charge of a vehicle for a specific purpose in connection with saving life. 'Blanket powers', he added, 'could no longer be included in acts, since acts purport to do certain things and any real powers authorised must be associated with the acts' purpose'.¹

Blanket power to make regulations, however, had been retained, subject to the condition that they remain effective only for the restricted period of twenty-eight days.²

The amended Civil Defence Bill was reintroduced to the House on 10 July 1962 by the Associate Minister of Finance, D.C. Seath. He outlined the changes which had been made to the Bill since it was first brought down, and then referred it to the Local Bills Committee.³

The Local Bills Committee

Seath had mentioned in his introductory speech that few representations had been received since the Bill was first introduced.⁴ Those made to the Local Bills Committee were to be few also, a fact which suggested that civil defence generated little interest. The Municipal and Counties Associations, who had agreed the previous year to make joint submissions, showed the

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ N.Z.P.D., Vol. 330, p. 772, 10 July, 1962.

⁴ Ibid.

main interest in the Bill. They argued before the Committee that local authorities should be given wider powers for requisitioning property and supplies, and be able to enter more freely into contracts during emergencies. They also requested local government representation on the N.C.D.C.

Submissions made by the Home Servicemans Association called for the preparation of local authority civil defence plans to be made mandatory, and subject to a fixed completion date.

The New Zealand Law Society asked the Committee to make the impersonation of a civil defence officer an offence.¹

Crompton informed the Regional Commissioners of the submissions in October. It was agreed that a provision placing a time limit on the preparation of plans could not be enforced, for beyond the clause stating that local authorities shall prepare a plan, a greater power could not be given to the Minister. There was considerable opposition to the local authority associations being represented on the N.C.D.C., and as a compromise it was decided to recommend to the Local Bills Committee that they be given representation on a national planning committee. The questions of requisitioning and contracts were held over as they raised legal technicalities. The submissions from the New Zealand Law Society were acted upon although they were not discussed.

The Bill returns to the House

The Civil Defence Bill was reported back to the House from the Local Bills Committee on 7 November 1962, seventeen months

¹ Details of submissions from H.O.C.R., October, 1962.

after drafting had begun. Piloting the Bill through the House was the responsibility of the Minister of Civil Defence, F.L.A. Gotz.¹

The Minister informed Parliament that the local authorities were required to have plans prepared and approved within a year of the Act becoming law. This was, however, to be a most unrealistic demand, despite the fact that the Bill now contained coercive clauses.² In the Local Bills Committee it had been decided to make provisions of the War Pensions Act applicable to civil defence workers, but only for one year following the enactment of the legislation. If by then a local authority did not have an approved plan, responsibility for compensation would be placed on the local authority.

As section 44 had been radically amended in the Local Bills Committee it appeared that the Ministry had made concessions regarding the imposition of coercive provisions.³ H.J.L. May, a member of the committee and Opposition spokesman for civil defence, said that some witnesses to the Committee, as well as some of its members, had been 'concerned as to whether any civil defence scheme would succeed on the basis outlined in the Bill, and wondered if it should be made mandatory'.⁴ The idea behind rewriting section 44, he said, 'was to enable a certain amount of

¹For the Minister's enunciation of civil defence policy in this context see Chapter IV, pp. 64-65.

²N.Z.P.D., Vol. 332, p. 2503, 7 November, 1962.

³Of the 58 sections only 4 were amended by the Committee. Minor amendments were made to sections 12 and 22. A new section 42A was added, and section 44 was completely rewritten. - Report from Mr. A.E. Allen (National, Franklin), Chairman of the Local Bills Committee. - Ibid., p. 2507.

⁴Ibid., p. 2505.

pressure to be exerted on the local authorities'.¹

The attitude of the Opposition

Prior to the Bill being referred to the Local Bills Committee in July the Labour Opposition had concentrated its interest on whether a civil defence organisation was to be defined as a local authority and, if so, whether the public would be permitted to attend its meetings.² At that stage, the Bill appeared to have received very little attention from the Opposition.

When the legislation was returned to the House in November, May explained that 'the Opposition has carefully considered this Bill and is very much in favour of the proposal to establish a civil defence scheme'.³ He could hardly have acted otherwise as the demand for civil defence had initially come from a Labour Government. May went on to add that 'the reaction by many people to the term civil defence is that it has something to do with a military organisation'.⁴ But, he observed, 'that is not correct as a perusal of the Bill will show'.⁵ He stressed, however, that 'we must place the emphasis on the civil side'.⁶ The military overtones of civil defence, particularly in regard to personnel has continued to concern the Labour party.⁷

As the members of the Opposition supported the Bill and the

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid., Vol. 330, pp. 772-4, 10 July, 1962.

³ Ibid., Vol. 332, p. 2505, 7 November, 1962.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ For further details see Chapter VII, p. 121, 138.

principle of civil defence, they had very little to add to the debate and showed only limited interest overall. The Bill was given a third reading on 10 December 1962.

Civil defence and the Press

During the passage of the Civil Defence Bill, one point raised by the Opposition was to have serious consequences. Throughout the preceding four years the press had been generally sympathetic, though not particularly interested in civil defence. From the close of 1962 onwards, however, the press, particularly in certain quarters became very critical of the organisation. The reason for this was the Minister's opposition to press representation on the N.C.D.C.

M. Connelly (Labour, Riccarton) had asked during the debate why the N.Z.B.C. was represented on the committee, but not the accredited press.¹ The Minister replied that he could not 'find a place for the press in national planning', and justified his decision by saying 'the dissemination of news in a time of emergency must be carried out at much greater speed than the press can achieve, with the slowness of printing and delivery of newspapers'.² The Minister's statement offended the New Zealand press which reacted with a number of editorials and statements extolling the importance of newspapers as disseminators of news, and criticising civil defence generally, and the Minister for his attitude in particular.

The president of the Newspaper Proprietors Association,

¹N.Z.P.D., Vol. 332, p. 2508, 7 November, 1962.

²Ibid., p. 2510.

P.R. Scoble, described the Minister's exclusion of the press as 'irresponsible'¹ and commented that:

In time of emergency the public must be kept informed of what is going on. And newspapers, together with the radio, have a highly significant role to play in keeping the public properly informed. If the public is not kept properly informed in time of emergency, rumours can spread with alarming rapidity ... 2

The Dunedin Evening Star informed its readers:

The Minister of Internal Affairs has some good ideas, and some peculiar ones. Among the latter is his inability to find a place for the Press at the national level of his civil defence organisation ... As a matter of plain common sense, he should think again and with a more open mind.³

Taking a similar theme to that of the President of the Newspaper Proprietors Association, the Christchurch Star editorialised:

In an emergency, all means of communication would have vital roles to play, but there is no substitute for the printed word, particularly in the confusion of a national disaster. There is no substitute for the ability of a newspaper to present the facts of a situation.⁴

A week later the same newspaper expressed its feeling about the Civil Defence Bill which it described as:

A document drawn up by civil servants for civil servants. In an emergency, it would dispense with government by the people's elected representatives. The country is not in a mood to be governed in time of disaster by a committee of civil servants.⁵

In an attempt to pacify the angry press the Minister stated at the end of November:

Newspapers would play a large part in the task of informing the public of developments in civil defence, in maintaining

¹ Southland News, Invercargill, 10 November, 1962.

² Ibid.

³ Evening Star, Dunedin, 30 November, 1962.

⁴ Christchurch Star, 19 November, 1962.

⁵ Ibid., 28 November, 1962.

interest and enlisting support, and in educating people on how to act in an emergency.¹

The damage, however, had been done and from the close of 1962 civil defence was on many occasions to receive unfavourable press coverage. There appeared to be a concerted attempt to report as many critical statements and comments as possible, though certainly not all newspapers were equally critical or all criticism unwarranted. In fact, they were to be indirectly influential in spurring the development of civil defence, but by the same token they consistently invoked a poor image for the organisation.

The publishers of the Auckland and Christchurch Stars, in particular, were not prepared to allow their antipathy for civil defence to rest. In July 1963 the Auckland Star produced a feature article entitled 'Not that Press should mention it, but there is a Master Plan for Disaster Day', describing the recently released Civil Defence Planning Guide for Local Authorities in the most satirical terms. Readers were informed that:

We have the Great Plan. Fifty-two pages of it. In all a prodigious work ... Plans, plans, plans. Mayors, town and country clerks, the whole community of municipal officialdom are required under the Civil Defence Act 1962, to put on their thinking caps and bestir themselves.²

A veiled reference to the press's exclusion from the N.C.D.C. could not be avoided:

For all you know, on the awful day the Press may be under total censorship, introduced by regulation, by Order-in-Council pursuant to the Civil Defence Act, 1962 ... a

¹ The Press, Christchurch, 30 November, 1962.

² Auckland Star, 15 July, 1963.

Censored disaster! What a triumph of bureaucracy that would be ... 1

Almost to a year following the enactment of the Civil Defence Bill, the Christchurch Star reported that a first meeting of the N.C.D.C. had not yet been held, and described the committee as:

A body composed entirely of civil servants. It appears to have been conceived by the Public Service to give department heads a monopoly in the administration of civil defence.²

In a barely disguised reference to the preponderance of retired military personnel in civil defence the newspaper added that 'the most successful emergency scheme had been the EPS during the war'.³ This it stated inaccurately 'was operated entirely by people drawn from the fields of business and commerce'.⁴

Press criticism of civil defence was to remain on a rather petty and uninformed level until 1968. One notable but short-lived exception concerned policy. Initially the press had generally supported the need for a protection scheme against nuclear attack, but as time passed it was argued increasingly that such a threat was remote and, therefore, civil defence priority should be placed on the danger of natural disaster. At the end of 1962 the Christchurch Star, for example, commented in an editorial that:

The type of disaster to which the Dominion is most prone is that caused by flood and earthquake, and it is such natural upheavals that the emergency organisation should be orientated.⁵

¹ Ibid.

² Christchurch Star, 22 November, 1963.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 19 November, 1962.

But when civil defence policy was changed in 1964 the decision passed almost unnoticed in the press.

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The Civil Defence Bill which was placed on the Statute Book at the end of 1962 had defined the two contingencies which the civil defence organisation was designed to cope with, hostile attack and natural disaster. Legislative definition, however, bore little relation to immediate reality. Within the Ministry of Civil Defence, and particularly amongst the Regional Commissioners, the initial emphasis which had been placed on the threat of nuclear attack continued. But, paradoxically, this emphasis bore little relation to the actual development of the organisation which took place during the early 1960's. The next chapter will show why this occurred, and how civil defence policy evolved to a point when, in 1964, a nuclear attack on the country was no longer considered a possibility. Only then did natural disaster belatedly become the primary concern of civil defence.

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CHAPTER IV

CIVIL DEFENCE POLICY: 1960-1965

The need to protect New Zealand against the possible threat of a nuclear attack had been the primary motive for establishing the Ministry of Civil Defence in 1959, though in keeping with previous civil defence schemes, the purpose of the organisation had been extended to cover natural disaster. Throughout the early 1960's, however, natural disaster was to remain a secondary consideration. In the public mind civil defence was identified with nuclear attack, yet at no time was the organisation prepared to cope with an attack or, for that matter, with a serious natural disaster.

Within the Ministry of Civil Defence the early 1960's were characterised by a growing divergence of policy interpretation. The Regional Commissioners consistently maintained that providing protection against a nuclear attack should remain the basic concern of civil defence. At the ministerial level there was, however, a gradual movement away from the nuclear 'theme' with increasing emphasis being placed on the danger of natural disaster. This divergence of attitudes culminated in 1964 with a major policy re-evaluation when the Minister directed that civil defence planning should be based on the 'known forms of natural disaster'.

To place this policy evolution in perspective it is necessary to return to 1960 and consider the first detailed statement of civil defence policy, which was intended to provide the basis for future developments.

'Civil Defence in New Zealand': a written statement of policy

Prior to the appointment of the Regional Commissioners in June 1960 the Ministry's attention was devoted to the preparation of Civil Defence in New Zealand, a document designed primarily for Government departments, agencies and the local authorities. Published in July 1960 under the hand of the Director of Civil Defence, J.K. Hunn, the document has an important place in the development of civil defence as it was the first attempt to put policy into writing. But, when placed in the perspective of developments from 1960 onwards, very little of the policy was in fact ever implemented, though it showed very clearly the current preoccupation with the threat of nuclear attack at the time.

Civil Defence in New Zealand stated that if the country were to be attacked the main targets would be Auckland, Wellington/Hutt, Christchurch and Dunedin. Planning was to be based on two assumptions; firstly, where a warning period preceded the attack, and secondly, where an attack came without warning. In the former case the evacuation of the four main centres would take place, the decision to evacuate being made by the Government. Following the attack civil defence units would return to the devastated city(s) to carry out rescue and relief measures. It was not assumed, however, that the total metropolitan population of the country could be evacuated.

Where no warning was given civil defence units from outlying districts would come to the assistance of the city(s) following the attack. It was not denied that other targets could be attacked, but it was considered common sense to evacuate the four

most probable targets if a warning period was declared.¹

As four target zones had been defined, this, it was argued, enforced the creation of four regions, each controlled by a Commissioner. This decision, which has already been noted, was changed even before Civil Defence in New Zealand was published in July. The regional concept, the document explained, was based on British practice where Regional Commissioners operated in liaison with the armed forces. While there was no apparent reason to justify the regional approach, it was strange that Britain's rather than New Zealand's own experience of twenty years before was not drawn upon for this purpose. The regional approach, although originally adopted from Britain in 1940, had been a feature of civil defence in this country during the war period. It certainly appeared that New Zealand's own civil defence history had not been studied.

Following a brief discussion of methods of control within the target zones, it was stated that towns outside these areas should set up civil defence units which could be utilised in case of natural disaster. They would also be able to provide assistance to a major city in the region subjected to an attack. It was not thought practicable, however, for counties to set up civil defence units, though it was considered that they should possess simple plans to cope with any peacetime disaster.

The question of air-raid shelters was left in abeyance, 'shelter policy must again be the subject of planning and appropriate advice by the Ministry of Civil Defence in conjunction with

¹Ministry of Civil Defence, Civil Defence in New Zealand (Wellington, 1960), p. 8.

the relevant authorities'.¹

The concluding section of the document dealt with the relationship of the organisation, already outlined, to the problem of natural disaster. Local organisations were considered adequate to meet the contingencies of both nuclear attack and natural disaster, though in the former situation certain technical aspects of rescue and relief measures would have to be known. In the case of an earthquake it was pointed out that there would be no chance of evacuation because of the absence of warning, though in the case of fires, floods or volcanic activity, where warnings could generally be issued, evacuation would be possible. The final passage emphasised that civil defence was to be 'an all purpose organisation for major emergency in peace and war'.²

Civil Defence in New Zealand was a statement of intent rather than a set of detailed proposals. The immediate reaction of those who read it, particularly the local authorities, is not known, but it can be assumed that those who took the trouble to do so must have been at least puzzled by some of the content. The discussion of warning periods and evacuation, particularly in case of nuclear attack, lacked credibility as nothing was said about how warnings were to be given and transmitted, or how the complex task of evacuation was to be carried out.

In discussing the threat of nuclear attack the tone of the document was sombre. The 1958 Defence Review had been quoted at some length but the qualifying statement, 'Civil defence planning is not related to a belief that a nuclear threat to New Zealand

¹ Ibid., p. 13.

² Ibid., p. 14.

was imminent', was omitted.¹ Nevertheless, to have stated the case for civil defence as a protection against a purely hypothetical threat of nuclear attack (which it was anyway), may have reduced the document's designed impact.

Although civil defence was to be 'an all-purpose organisation' the text strongly indicated that the threat of nuclear attack was the primary concern. This resulted in the document's most apparent defect, its failure to stress the importance of being prepared to cope with natural disaster.

Policy discussion within the Ministry

Although Civil Defence in New Zealand had outlined the broad purpose of the organisation, this did not preclude periodic interpretation and restatement of policy within the Ministry.

In October 1960 the use of British civil defence manuals in New Zealand was discussed at a conference. While the Regional Commissioners considered they were suitable, a military representative attending the conference questioned their acceptance. As the manuals were only concerned with protection against nuclear attack, he considered they conflicted with existing policy which was 'natural disasters first, nuclear warfare second'.² Bourke, Regional Commissioner for the Northern Region, questioned this interpretation of policy:

Our line of policy should be firmly based on the requirement of nuclear war, as New Zealand would be in the front line and any organisation developed with this in mind would be a perfect organisation to deal with most natural calamities.³

¹ A.J.H.R., Review of Defence, A.12, 1958, p. 16.

² H.O.C.R., October, 1960.

³ Ibid.

Of the three Regional Commissioners, Bourke was consistently the strongest advocate for protection against nuclear attack; for within his region was Auckland, providing the most 'likely' target.

The line of reasoning put forward by Bourke prevailed amongst the Regional Commissioners throughout the early 1960's and, although they did not dismiss the threat of natural disaster, it certainly appeared to be a subordinate, if not at times incidental, consideration.

The Regional Commissioners' consistent emphasis on the danger of nuclear attack appeared to be the result of limited ministerial direction and consultation, thus permitting them considerable latitude of policy interpretation. The result was that as the Minister began to place diminishing importance on the threat of attack, a growing divergence of policy interpretation became apparent within the Ministry. This was clearly illustrated during the passage of the Civil Defence Bill in 1962.

Civil defence policy and legislation¹

During the debate on the legislation the Minister of Civil Defence, F.L.A. Gotz, had laid particular stress on the danger of natural disaster in New Zealand and his attitude to nuclear attack was in marked contrast to some of his earlier statements. He had observed that:

In the European countries, of course, the fear is largely of nuclear war. We in New Zealand are fortunate in that we do not think there is such a danger, but still, in planning for civil defence, we cannot disregard the risk, and therefore if there is a necessity to set up monitoring to detect radio-activity, or anything of that nature, we will be ready and

¹For a discussion of the legislation see Chapter III.

the Government will have played its part.¹

Although the Minister had not dismissed the threat of nuclear attack, his statement was noteworthy because the need for preparations to cope with such an event had been voiced in the future tense. From a Minister who previously had spoken of the 'duty to guard against potential dangers which come from the skies',² this was a significant development and one which marked, at least at ministerial level, the beginning of a decline in the emphasis placed on the threat of nuclear attack.

Civil Defence Planning Guide for Local Authorities

The Minister's exposition of policy during the passage of the Civil Defence Bill was, however, in marked contrast to the information given in a planning guide distributed to the local authorities by the Ministry in July 1963. The introduction to this publication which had been produced by the Regional Commissioners stated:

Planning for civil defence must be based on the appreciation of the major threat which faces New Zealand. The major threat to any country must be global warfare. The direct or indirect threat to this country is very difficult to assess. It can be assumed, however, that a potential enemy is capable of delivering a nuclear attack anywhere in the world.³

The secondary threat was from:

Natural causes (which) present a more concrete problem. New Zealand in its short history has already suffered from earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, and has experienced floods, seismic sea-waves, fires, violent storms and epidemics.⁴

¹ N.Z.P.D., Vol. 332, p. 2503, 7 November, 1961.

² See Chapter II, p. 31.

³ Ministry of Civil Defence, Civil Defence Planning Guide for Local Authorities (Wellington, 1963), pp. 5-6.

⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

In view of the priority envisaged in the preamble to the document it was not surprising that a section dealt with the problem of nuclear attack, but no comparable section existed on natural disaster, although this was seen to be the more 'concrete problem'.

Policy and the 1958 Defence Review

Within the Ministry discussions on policy continued infrequently, usually prompted by external considerations which required an interpretation of policy.

In July 1964 the Director reported to the Regional Commissioners that a new army directive indicated there would be no nuclear warfare planning. As this was 'contrary to civil defence policy' and would 'present a complete misconception to army personnel', he stated that the matter would be raised with the Chief of the General Staff.¹

At the same conference Bourke questioned the currency of the policy contained in the 1958 Defence Review. Peren pointed out that he understood civil defence policy was to plan to cope with natural disasters, but with the organisation being capable of expansion to meet a nuclear attack. This, the Director, commented, was the broad policy stated by the two Ministers of Civil Defence. He then explained that the organisation needed in the case of both a nuclear attack or a natural disaster was similar, but in the former situation there were two special aspects to consider. Firstly, specialist training was required for monitoring and countering the effects of radiation. Secondly,

¹H.O.C.R., July 1964.

the approach 'to rescue was different following a nuclear attack'. As to whether the 1958 Defence Review remained current, the Director said that each White Paper issued superseded its predecessor but each one had no standing unless legislation implemented its proposals.¹ His reply was not entirely satisfactory though the matter was not taken further.

Discussion about the currency of Defence Reviews was largely unwarranted as the only complete statement of civil defence policy was contained in Civil Defence in New Zealand, but this document was not referred to. A White Paper is a statement of Government intent but it is not mandatory for the proposals to be implemented by legislation or other means, although criticism may be incurred for not doing so. The Labour Government, having published the 1958 Defence Review, had honoured its intention by establishing the Ministry of Civil Defence. But as the original purpose of civil defence had been extended to cover natural disaster, the 1958 Defence Review then remained current only in part. Although a further Defence Review had been published by the National Government in 1961 no mention was made of civil defence.² But the new Government had seen fit to continue the scheme introduced under the previous administration by promoting civil defence legislation which incorporated the dual purpose of the organisation. Therefore, either the Civil Defence Act or Civil Defence in New Zealand provided the true basis of policy.

A change in policy

¹ Ibid.

² A.J.H.R., Review of Defence, A.19, 1961.

Early in 1964 the new Minister of Civil Defence, D.C. Seath,¹ addressing the first meeting of the national civil defence committee (N.C.D.C.)² stated:

I am not suggesting that planning against the consequences of nuclear disaster should be ignored, but first let us bend our energies to preparing against the known forms of natural disaster ... As to any special additional preparations that may be necessary to meet the threat of nuclear attack those are matters which in my view might well be left to examination at a later stage of your proceedings.³

The Minister's address marked the turning point in civil defence policy, and was the culmination of a gradual decline in the importance attached to the threat of nuclear attack. Realism had at last prevailed.

Following the first meeting of the N.C.D.C. several planning sub-committees were established, some of which required in their terms of reference a definition of the purpose of civil defence.⁴ The task of drawing up terms of reference and producing a new Government civil defence plan to replace the out-dated Government Action in a Major Emergency⁵ was delegated by the N.C.D.C. to a national plans co-ordinating committee.⁶ Members of the

¹ F.L.A. Gotz had been defeated at the 1963 General Election. His portfolios were taken over in the new Government by D.C. Seath who had been Associate Minister of Finance in the previous administration.

² For the composition and functions of the N.C.D.C. see Chapter III, p. 40. For the circumstances surrounding the committee's first meeting see Chapter VI, pp. 100-103.

³ Reported in The Press, Christchurch, 18 February, 1964.

⁴ For the functions of the planning committees see Chapter VI, pp. 103-108.

⁵ For details of this plan produced in 1954 see Chapter I, pp. 17-18.

⁶ The national plans co-ordinating committee was composed of the following: The Director of Civil Defence, Representatives of the Counties and Municipal Associations, Deputy Director General of Health, representatives from the Industries and Commerce Department, Ministry of Works, Post Office, Transport Department, N.Z.B.C., Police and armed services.

committee went further than the Minister's verbal terms of reference to the N.C.D.C. by deciding that New Zealand would not be subject to nuclear warfare.¹ The committee's decision was based on the view that 'a limited tactical use' of nuclear weapons could probably occur 'without world-wide disaster implications', but 'an all-out atomic attack could well mean destruction of the world'. The committee 'considered that no nation would be prepared to take the risk' and therefore civil defence in New Zealand would concentrate on the threat of natural disaster.²

Although taking a rather simplistic view of nuclear strategy and international affairs these deliberations by a non-specialist committee marked the end of a civil defence scheme primarily orientated to the threat of nuclear attack.³ It was to be some time, however, before the finality of the committee's decision was fully appreciated, especially by the Regional Commissioners who had not been involved with the committee. In fact, there was to be a temporary breakdown in communications within the Ministry, the consequences of which were made readily apparent when, in July

¹ The committee's deliberations appear to have first been made public at the 1966 Municipal Association conference by P. Wakelin, Mayor of Carterton and the Association's representative on the national plans co-ordinating committee. See New Zealand Municipal Association, Proceedings of the Fifty-third Conference, 1966, p. 70.

² Details of the committee's discussion were made available to the writer by P. Wakelin (Letter, 19 June, 1970).

³ It seems doubtful whether the committee's discussion could be termed 'a comprehensive study of the likelihood, objectives and other aspects of nuclear attack, particularly as they related to New Zealand'. Although not specifically referring to the committee, the Minister of Civil Defence has stated that the decision to change policy was primarily based on the committee's deliberations. (Letter to the writer, 28 October, 1970).

1964, the Regional Commissioners conferred with the chairman of the Publicity Planning Committee, one of the N.C.D.C. sub-committees.

The chairman, an officer from the Tourist and Publicity Department, stated that the committee was concerned with the 'general education of the public to ensure they would understand civil defence and co-operate'.¹ But he noted:

At present the organisation and function of civil defence were nebulous in the public mind ... The committee had wondered about the aims and objects of civil defence, particularly those relating to nuclear attack.²

Bourke considered the nuclear threat was 'the only common theme which would prompt people throughout the country to join or support civil defence'.³ Peren said 'people had become accustomed to earthquakes and felt they could be dealt with off the cuff'.⁴ He was prepared 'to support and work for a nuclear orientated civil defence if cabinet directed it, but the organisation needed definite instructions'.⁵ Peren also considered that the 1958 White Paper should either be 'revised or withdrawn', noting that there had been 'intimations from the Minister that natural disaster was the main concern'.⁶

The Regional Commissioners now seemed to be fighting a rear-guard action to retain a nuclear orientated civil defence policy, but as they appeared largely unaware that a decision on future

¹ H.O.C.R., July, 1964.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

policy had already been taken, there was an element of futility in their discussion with the chairman of the publicity committee. In view of the apparent lack of consultation within the Ministry, the Regional Commissioners had been placed in the position of espousing a policy which, although they strongly believed in, had now been superseded.

Any doubts as to the substance of the new policy were dispelled with the appearance in 1965 of the plan, Government Action in Major Disaster (G.A.M.D.) which stated:

Because the threat of nuclear attack is considered remote, priority has been given to the measures necessary to meet natural disaster.¹

Future civil defence planning was to be based on the assumptions of:

A disaster which does not cause damage or casualties in Wellington, but is on a scale which necessitates action by Government; to

An earthquake which devastates Wellington, and extends into Nelson and Marlborough in the Southern Civil Defence Region (South Island) and Wairarapa and Hawkes Bay in the Central Civil Defence Region (lower half of the North Island). Its effects would have lessened in Napier and Hastings, and there may have been some disturbances in western areas of the Central Region, possibly as far as Palmerston North. This situation would involve Government direction of the civil defence effort.²

The new planning assumptions detailed in G.A.M.D. which were to provide the terms of reference for the N.C.D.C. sub-committee were approved by the N.C.D.C. in June 1965 and shortly afterwards by the Minister.

¹ Ministry of Civil Defence, Government Action in Major Disaster (Wellington, 1966), p. 2. For the contents and circumstances surrounding the compilation of this plan, see Chapter VI, pp. 103-108.

² Ibid.

The new developments did not meet with the approbation of all and prompted Bourke to write to the other Regional Commissioners in July, stating that:

I feel that it is dangerous for the country to be so inadequately prepared to cope with radiation surveillance. Without this, any action to meet a national emergency, particularly in regard to the present negative attitude towards shelters, would result in grim chaos.¹

His views, however, did not prevail.

*

*

Since 1959 civil defence had been identified with the need to protect the country against a nuclear attack, yet, by 1964, New Zealand was no more prepared to cope with such an event than it had been when the Defence White Paper was issued in 1958.

Within this period progress with establishing local authority civil defence organisations was almost non-existent and detailed planning of central Government action in an emergency was not begun until early in 1964.² Moreover, the specialised requirements necessary to cope with an attack were never carried out.

The need for radiation monitoring equipment was first discussed at a conference in March 1961 where Burrows suggested that monitoring facilities should be established in high schools. It was agreed that the Minister should be approached as the matter was national policy.³ The question was raised again in July when the Regional Commissioners asked for recommendations to be made

¹H.O.C.R., July, 1965.

²For the reasons behind the delay in local and central Government civil defence planning see Chapter VI.

³H.O.C.R., March, 1961.

regarding the type, location and number of radiac instruments necessary to set up an adequate monitoring system throughout the country.¹ Although equipment was eventually purchased from Britain only small stocks were ever held and then only by the Regional Commissioners.

The need for a warning system to operate throughout the country was discussed on many occasions between 1960 and 1964 but the technical difficulties involved, notwithstanding the fact that New Zealand had no means of detecting incoming missiles or aircraft, effectively prevented a system from being developed.

The question of air-raid shelters had been raised initially in Civil Defence in New Zealand, but the only time the topic was discussed occurred in 1962 when the Ministry was preparing a safety precautions handbook for issue to the general public. In one of the rare cases of direct ministerial intervention Gotz instructed that no reference should be made to the need for household shelters.²

Even the concept of 'target zones' was never fully developed. Civil Defence in New Zealand had stated that the delineation of four 'target zones' would automatically involve the creation of four regions. Yet, only three Regional Commissioners were ever appointed, a fact which indicated that the concept of 'target

¹ Ibid., July, 1961.

² Ibid., May, 1962. The handbook was to state that: In some countries, people are being urged by their Government to construct and equip shelters capable of accommodating a family for periods of up to 14 days. Such a shelter policy has not at this stage been adopted in New Zealand, nor is it recommended. A degree of evacuation of potential target zones is considered to be a more practical measure - Ministry of Civil Defence, Householders' Handbook for Emergencies (Wellington, 1963), p. 21.

zones' was not as important as had originally been considered.

Throughout the early 1960's it was evident that the Government had neither the intention nor the ability to provide the country with protection against nuclear attack. While this was to be of no consequence after 1964, the failure to press the development of civil defence had been to ignore the other concern of the organisation - natural disaster.

In view of this lack of progress discussion on policy within the period was to a large extent immaterial - for whether civil defence was to be concerned with nuclear attack, natural disaster, or both, was almost irrelevant - an organisation to implement policy existed only in skeleton form, the organisational infrastructure had yet to be completed.

The influence of time appeared to be the main contributing factor underlying the 1964 policy change. The degree of emotionalism which had surrounded civil defence and the threat of nuclear attack in the late 1950's and early 1960's had diminished to the point where a dispassionate view of the situation had revealed (what had always been obvious) that the chances of an attack on New Zealand were so remote as to be of no consequence.

The decision to place priority on natural disaster, however, was not based on a reappraisal of the threat, but rather on the view that protection against nuclear attack was no longer warranted. Thus, the danger of natural disaster - the most pressing reason for an effective civil defence scheme in New Zealand - received only de facto recognition.

In view of the policy change, it was somewhat ironic when the 1966 Defence Review commented:

The civil defence organisation in New Zealand has reached a stage in its planning and development where it could provide a most valuable means of co-ordinating measures to deal with the consequences of nuclear attack or other major assault against New Zealand itself, unlikely though this may be.¹

The Review did add, however, that:

In present circumstances ... the usefulness of civil defence machinery in coping on a national or regional scale with the major peacetime crises of earthquake or other natural disasters is the aspect of its work on which it is sensible to concentrate most attention.²

Before turning to the organisational development of civil defence, the next chapter discusses the character of natural disaster in New Zealand. Hitherto a distinctly secondary consideration, the problem had now become the raison d'être of civil defence.

* * *

¹ A.J.H.R., Review of Defence, A.8, 1966, p. 9.

² Ibid.

CHAPTER V

THE NEW PRIORITY: NATURAL DISASTER

Throughout its short history New Zealand's vulnerability to natural disaster, particularly earthquakes, had been made only too apparent. Yet there had been an almost consistent failure to recognise the danger and the need for a permanent emergency organisation.¹ The decision in 1964 to place civil defence priority on natural disaster was therefore a belated acknowledgment of the obvious. It was natural disaster, not nuclear attack, which posed the real threat to the country.

As 1964 marked a turning point in the development of civil defence this chapter forms something of an interlude and presents a general survey of the features of natural disaster in New Zealand. Although outside the immediate scope of civil defence, certain fields of local authority responsibility for public safety are also discussed. For not only have the local authorities a responsibility for civil defence but they are also in a position

¹ The war period had been the notable exception, though it was the fear of attack rather than natural disaster which prompted the Government to introduce the E.P.S. Although the scheme was allowed to lapse at the end of the war the Government, prompted by the Wellington-Wairarapa earthquake of 1942, had realised the economic implications of natural disaster by establishing the Earthquake and War Damage Commission in 1944. War damage had previously been covered by the War Damage Act, 1941.

Under the Earthquake and War Damage Regulations all property insured against fire is deemed to be insured to the extent of the indemnity value against earthquake or war damage. Premiums at the rate of 5c (1969) for each \$100 of insurance cover are collected by the insurance companies and paid into the Earthquake and War Damage Fund. At 31 March 1969 the fund stood at \$109,499,876. In 1950 the scheme was extended to cover abnormal storms and floods, and more recently, landslips. Volcanic eruption is also covered.

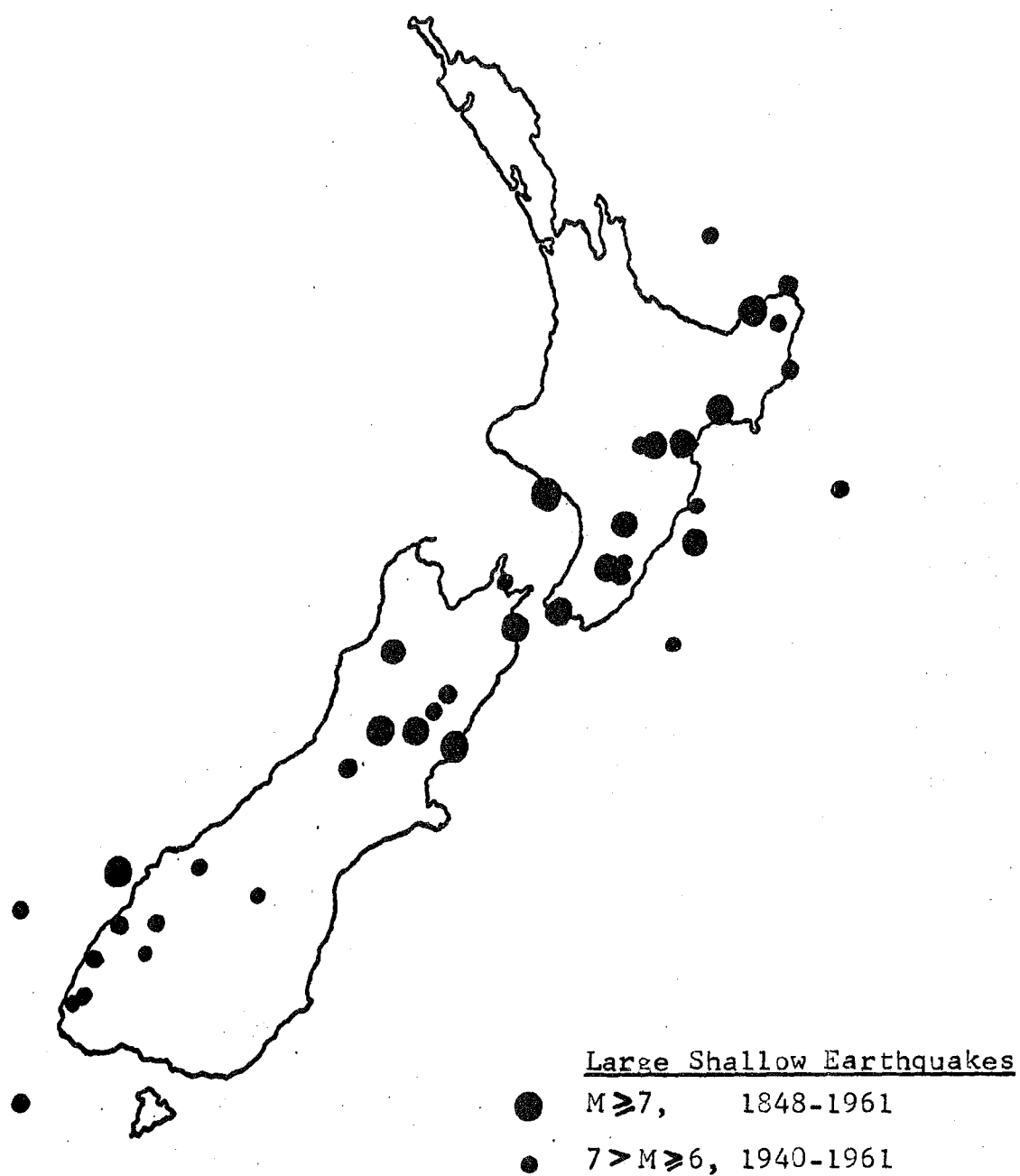
to enforce preventative measures which could reduce the impact of a disaster, or at least prevent one from reaching major proportions.

Earthquakes

Earthquakes, which constitute the most potentially destructive natural hazard in New Zealand, occur because the country forms part of a geologically unstable belt extending around the circumference of the Pacific Ocean.¹ The first recorded earthquake occurred in 1848, and subsequently sixteen have reached a magnitude of Force 7 or more with progressively larger numbers of lesser magnitude. (See Fig. II.) In terms of loss of life and destruction, the most serious was that at Napier in 1931. Fortunately, many of the severe earthquakes have occurred in sparsely populated areas resulting in only minimal damage to life and property.

Although New Zealand is regarded as a country of moderate earthquake risk, a consensus does not exist amongst the earth scientists as to the varying degrees of risk within the country. A number of methods have been developed for studying seismicity and seismic zoning. One is the use of earthquake records but, for accuracy, recordings are required over a long period of time. This, however, is not possible in New Zealand, and zoning from short term records can be both inaccurate and dangerous. In Australia and New Zealand the distribution of faults has often been used as a method for zoning; one which some earth scientists

¹ Volcanic activity is an associated feature of this belt. Because of their location, however, New Zealand's active volcanoes constitute only a localised threat in the sparsely populated central North Island.

Fig. II¹

1. Adapted from F.F. Evison, 'Incidence of Large Shallow Earthquakes in New Zealand', R.R.S.

criticise. Eiby has said that:

The absence of a fault, or of any other geological feature, does not establish that there have been no earthquakes; and the fact that only small shocks have been experienced in the past does not establish that this is the upper limit of their possible size.¹

Clark et al have put forward a method of zoning based on tectonic activity:

Assuming that the present day geological processes are the key to the past, the geologist infers that earthquakes will have accompanied most of the similar prehistoric deformation shown in the relatively recent geological record, and, conversely, that major earthquakes will have been rare where there is no measurable deformation.²

From their study of tectonic activity Clark et al have zoned New Zealand into four areas of earthquake risk (see Fig. III), but they note that: 'It must be stressed that it is not possible to forecast how soon or where the next destruction or damage will occur in any zone'.³

Not all agree with Clark et al in their method of zoning.

Evison points out that:

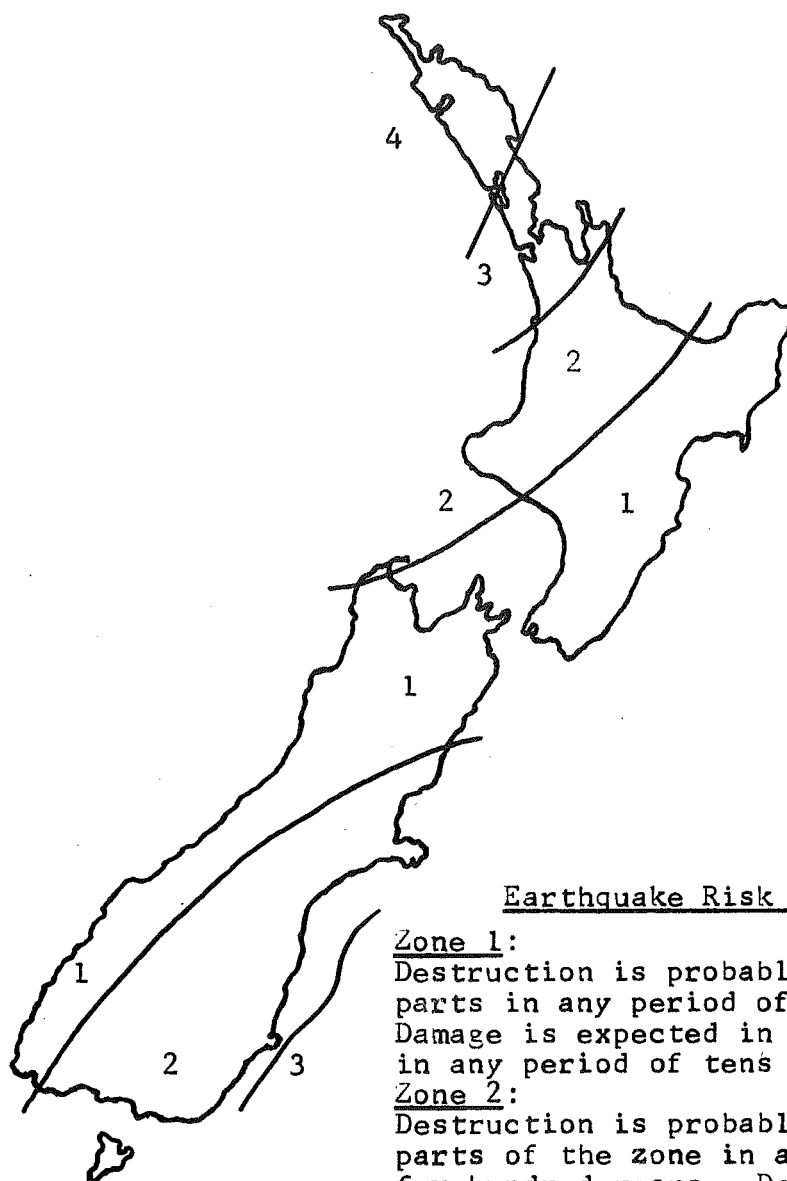
In the USSR, for example, evidence of geologically recent tectonic activity (folding, faulting, uplift, etc.) is regarded as relevant to seismic zoning. It is acknowledged, however, that the proper use of such evidence is in extending boundaries of zones beyond what have been indicated by the occurrence of past earthquakes ... such ancillary evidence has no application to New Zealand [because of the small size of the country].⁴

¹ G.A. Eiby, Earthquakes (London, Frederick Muller, 1967), p. 149.

² R.H. Clark et al, 'Tectonic and Earthquake risk zoning', Report of Royal Society of New Zealand earthquake risk sub-committee (RRS) (Wellington, Victoria University Department of Adult Education, 1967), p. 1.

³ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴ F.F. Evison, 'Incidence of large shallow earthquakes in New Zealand', RRS, p. 4.

Fig. III¹Earthquake Risk ZonesZone 1:

Destruction is probable in several parts in any period of 100 years. Damage is expected in numerous places in any period of tens of years.

Zone 2:

Destruction is probable in several parts of the zone in any period of a few hundred years. Damage is to be expected at numerous places in any period of 100 years.

Zone 3:

Destruction is possible though not probable in several parts of the zone in any period of a few hundred years. Damage is to be expected in numerous places in any period of 100 years.

Zone 4:

Destruction is possible though not probable in several parts of the zone in any period of a few thousand years. Damage is to be expected in several places in any period of a few hundred years.

1. Adapted from R.H. Clark, et. al., 'Tectonic and Earthquake Risk Zoning', R.R.S.

Accurate seismic zoning is necessary to ensure that the design and construction of buildings conforms to the known risk existing in any area. Zoning on the scale proposed by Clark et al has only a general application for building construction for as the movement of earthquake shock waves is greatly affected by the type of material through which they pass, macro-zoning must be supplemented by micro or site zoning.¹ The micro-zoning of cities has been widely carried out overseas but not as yet in New Zealand. Fyfe et al suggest that:

Major cities (in New Zealand) should be geologically mapped in detail and zoned in regard to expectable damage to the ground surface (which is likely to result in the) destruction of buildings, communications and water supply.²

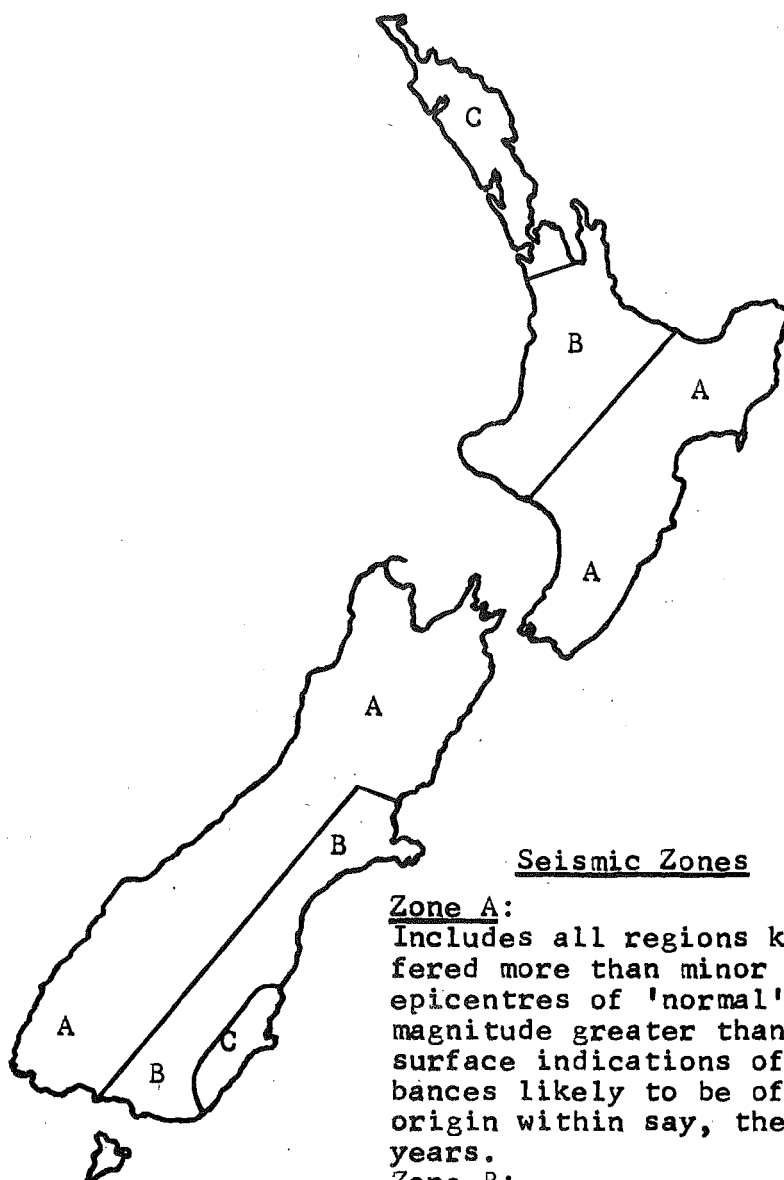
Despite the lack of a consensus amongst the earth scientists as to the accuracy or feasibility of seismic zoning, and in the face of strong opposition from the Seismological Observatory, the New Zealand Standards Association³ recently zoned the country for the purpose of compiling model building by-laws (see Fig. IV). In opposing the Association's move, the Superintendent of the Seismological Observatory said that: 'New Zealand is a small country and should be decreed as one unit as far as earthquake risk is concerned'.⁴ At a later date Eiby commented:

¹For example, damage is more likely to occur to buildings on reclaimed land, unconsolidated fill, etc. than on hard rock.

²H.E. Fyfe et al, 'Site zoning for earthquake risk', RRS, p. 3.

³The New Zealand Standards Association was established by legislation in 1965, replacing the Standards Institute which had been in existence since 1941. The function of the Association is to 'promote standardisation in industry and commerce and to promulgate standards with the object of improving the quality of goods ... industrial efficiency ... and promoting public and industrial welfare, health and safety'. Department of Statistics, New Zealand Official Yearbook (Wellington, 1969), p. 1002. The model building by-laws are contained in New Zealand Standard Specification (NZSS), 1900.

⁴Report in The Press, Christchurch, 13 May, 1966.

Fig. IV¹Seismic ZonesZone A:

Includes all regions known to have suffered more than minor damage, all known epicentres of 'normal' earthquakes of magnitude greater than 6 and all known surface indications of earth disturbances likely to be of earthquake origin within say, the last 10,000 years.

Zone B:

A buffer zone in which history indicates that moderate damage may result from earthquakes of intermediate magnitude within the lifetime of a building or from the distant effects of major earthquakes in Zone A.

Zone C:

Includes those regions which have suffered at the most trifling damage to the poorest class of non-earthquake resistant buildings and are free of epicentres of other than minor magnitude and of know reasonably recent ground disturbance.

1. Adapted from Standards Association, NZSS 1900, Chapter 8, 1965, p. 25, and Commentary on Chapter 8 of NZSS 1900, 1965, p. 11.

No part of New Zealand is far from a known earthquake origin, and until recently a uniform code of anti-seismic building laws was recommended for the whole country. In spite of strong representations from the seismologists, a new code has been introduced, which slightly increases the requirements in some areas, but reduces them in others that include two of our largest cities. There may be room for argument about the appropriate degree of strengthening needed to make a building earthquake resistant, but if the existing level was adequate, there is as little excuse for raising it in some centres as there is for lowering it in others. Insistence that earthquakes are necessarily less frequent and less severe in areas that are without known active faulting can only be described as irresponsible.¹

Although the Standards Association seismic zoning does not meet with the approval of many earth scientists, in the absence of an improved zoning, the Model Building By-Laws fulfil a useful function by ensuring a certain standard of anti-seismic construction. However, it is not mandatory for the local authorities to adopt the by-laws, and some have exhibited a reluctance to do so.²

While new buildings must conform to local authority building regulations where they exist and are enforced, a major problem occurs in relation to those constructed before the first regulations were introduced in 1939. A cursory inspection of the older buildings in urban areas would indicate that many could be potentially dangerous in a severe earthquake. The Christchurch City Council Engineer recently pointed out that of the 1000

¹ G.H. Eiby, Earthquakes, p. 149.

² In 1967, of the 149 municipalities, 93 had adopted NZSS 1900, 19 were considering them and 16 had not yet adopted them. In the last two groups some local authorities could be using the predecessor of NZSS 1900, NZSS 95 - Information given by L. Sullivan, Secretary of the Municipal Association, (Interview, 23 April, 1970). At 6 November, 1969, of the 108 Counties, 48 had adopted NZSS 1900, 22 proposed to adopt, 8 had not yet adopted, and 2 had refused (Cheviot County and Great Barrier Island County). Replies were awaited from the remaining 28 Counties - Information given by M.F. McDonnell, Assistant Secretary of the Counties Association (Interview, 23 April, 1970).

buildings in the central business district of the city 'only about fifty of these have been built since 1935 and have anti-earthquake features built in', and 'about the same number have been strengthened'.¹ Although recent amendments to the Counties and Municipal Corporations' Acts have given the local authorities power to order the strengthening or demolition of buildings which are 'likely' to be dangerous during an earthquake, the economic implications will undoubtedly restrict the use of this power.²

The New Zealand Society for Earthquake Engineering which undertook a detailed survey of the Inangahua earthquake (24 May, 1968) made a number of comments regarding the safety of old buildings, both within the disaster area and distant from it.

At Nelson:

Inspection of commercial buildings after the event revealed a surprising number of potential seismic hazards ... That many of these buildings did not suffer actual damage is fortuitous ... Inspection has shown that there are a number of structures that should be partially demolished or strengthened ... There does not appear to be the necessary authority to deal with potential seismic hazards.³

In Greymouth:

¹ Report in the Christchurch Star, 22 June, 1970. In view of the concentration of people within a central business district, the need for safe buildings is obvious. For example, at any hour during a weekday in Christchurch there are approximately 69,000 people within the central business district.

² 'Both the Counties Amendment Act 1968 and the Municipal Corporations Amendment Act 1968 give county and borough councils clear authority to ensure the removal or strengthening of buildings likely to be dangerous in a moderate earthquake. The new authority will apply only to councils on which it is conferred by Order in Council made on the request of the local authority ... At 31 March 1969 four municipalities had applied for authority to exercise the new powers ...' - A.J.H.R., Report of the Department of Internal Affairs, H.22, 1969, pp. 16-17.

³ R.L. Saunders and G.A. Toynbee, 'Damage in the Nelson Area', Bulletin of the New Zealand Society for Earthquake Engineering (BNZSEE), Vol. 2, No. 1, February 1969, p. 124.

The great majority of the damage occurred to old buildings which had been designed with no thought for seismic resistance. In most cases their present condition was poor, compared to their original state. (Metal fixings had rusted, lime mortar had rotted out, cracks were present from previous earthquakes, etc.) The damage which occurred was in most cases obvious and inevitable ... Buildings designed to conform to the New Zealand Model Building By-laws suffered only insignificant damage.¹

Within the Inangahua township, damage to houses resulted from a number of contributing factors, notably, deferred maintenance, borer infestation, poor drainage and the numerous alterations and additions carried out 'without due regard to structural safeguards'.² But on a more optimistic note it was pointed out that:

The ordinary timber frame houses, as built in New Zealand, generally have a high level of earthquake resistance, especially if only of one storey and of a rectangular or well compartmented shape, and built on good ground.³

In a country which can expect at least one Force 8 earthquake⁴ and a number of lesser magnitude every century, the need to ensure a high standard of earthquake resistant construction is obvious for both economic and public safety reasons.

Seismic Sea Waves (tsunamis)⁵

New Zealand's location within the Pacific Basin makes it vulnerable to coastal inundation by seismic sea waves. These are

¹ P.D. Anderson, F.R. Smith, F. Quinn, 'Damage in the Greymouth Area', BNZSEE, Vol. 2, No. 1, February 1969, p. 142.

² H.W. Yeatman, 'Survey and approach to restoration of damaged buildings', BNZSEE, Vol. 2, No. 1, February 1969, pp. 88-89.

³ B.H. Falconer, 'Initial appraisal of building damage in Inangahua', BNZSEE, Vol. 2, No. 1, February 1969, p. 78.

⁴ The last Force 8 earthquake occurred in the Wellington-Wairarapa region in 1855, 115 years ago. By way of comparison, the recent Peruvian earthquake registered 7.7 on the Richter Scale.

⁵ Tsunami is the commonly accepted oceanographic term.

impulsively generated waves usually resulting from submarine earthquakes and have been known to travel up to speeds of five hundred miles per hour. The slope of the wave front is often imperceptible in deep water, but upon reaching shallow and particularly constricted water, wave height rapidly increases resulting in the inundation of low lying coastal areas.

Throughout recorded history there are numerous examples of the destruction wrought by these waves within the Pacific Basin.¹

In May 1960, a severe earthquake in Chile generated a wave which travelled to a number of points around the Pacific rim, causing severe damage in Hawaii and Japan. In New Zealand considerable damage was done to shore installations at Napier and Lyttelton, and a number of coastal areas including the town of Whakatane were evacuated as a precaution.

Not only does a danger exist from a wave generated at a distance from the country, but also from one originating in the area of the continental shelf. Because of the short distance, warning of the wave's approach may not be possible. The only recent example of a wave being generated in New Zealand waters occurred in 1947 following a magnitude IV² earthquake thirty miles off the Gisborne coast. The wave was estimated to have reached between twenty and thirty feet in height, though fortunately, coastal damage was superficial and localised.³

¹For a brief account of seismic sea wave destruction see W. Bascome, Waves and Beaches (New York, Doubleday, 1964), pp. 106-116.

²Magnitude IV on the Modified Mercalli Scale. This scale measures the felt effect of earthquakes rather than magnitude as measured by the Richter Scale. The scale ranges from I - X.

³Details of the damage done by this wave were taken from the files of the Earthquake and War Damage Commission.

In response to the tsunami problem in the Pacific, the United States Coast and Geodetic Survey has developed a warning system, to which this country belongs.¹ The system is centred on Hawaii where information is received about all Pacific earthquakes which might produce a tsunami. If there appears to be a danger, warnings are issued to member countries throughout the Pacific Basin. On receipt of a warning in Wellington, civil defence organisations and the police in coastal areas are notified by an elaborate telephone procedure.

Flooding and Storms

Although storms and floods frequently cause loss of life and destruction in this country, unlike earthquakes, warnings can usually be given. While they may not pose a major threat to life, their economic significance can rival that of a severe earthquake. The cyclonic storm which passed over most of New Zealand in April 1968, exceptional in both intensity and the area affected, resulted in claims of \$1,785,787 being made against the Earthquake and War Damage Commission.² By way of comparison the Inangahua earthquake which occurred six weeks later cost the Commission \$2,430,000.³

Table I shows the distribution and frequency of storms and floods which have occurred over a period of twenty-six years, giving some indication of the vulnerability of the various areas of the country to these hazards.

¹ New Zealand joined the system in 1962.

² A.J.H.R., Report of the Earthquake and War Damage Commission, B.11, 1969, p. 4.

³ Ibid., p. 3.

TABLE I
STORMS AND FLOODS IN NEW ZEALAND (1944-1968)¹

Region	Floods	Floods and Storms	Total
North Auckland	5	6	11
Auckland	4	6	10
South Auckland	2	-	2
Waikato	8	4	12
Coromandel	1	1	2
Bay of Plenty	7	12	19
Hauraki	2	1	3
King Country	4	2	6
Taranaki	3	8	11
Wanganui	1	1	2
Gisborne	1	3	4
Hawkes Bay	2	3	5
Taihape	2	-	2
Wairarapa	3	1	4
Manawatu	5	3	8
Wellington	4	7	11
Marlborough	4	6	10
Nelson	4	7	11
Golden Bay	1	1	2
Westland	3	8	11
Canterbury	6	14	20
Otago	5	8	13
Southland	4	9	13

¹ This table has been compiled from the records of the Earthquake and War Damage Commission, Wellington. The floods, and floods and storms, listed are those which have caused 'extraordinary disaster damage' as defined under The Earthquake and War Damage Regulations, Amendment No. 2.

Fire

The Fire Service recognises that the maximum fire danger in New Zealand exists within port areas, large oil and petrol installations, and the highly concentrated commercial and business districts of the main urban centres; decreasing to a minimum in sparsely populated rural areas.¹ Fire brigades are distributed accordingly and an elaborate reinforcement system has been organised.

Under normal circumstances the possibility of a conflagration reaching disaster proportions always exists, but the most potential disaster problem facing the Fire Service is the outbreak of widespread fire following an earthquake in an urban area. Both overseas and local experience has shown that this invariably occurs, the risk being particularly acute in this country because of the reliance placed on timber as a construction material.²

Fire Safety

The question of fire safety has recently been studied in detail by a committee of enquiry set up in 1969 following a fire in a Wellington old people's home. Although the enquiry was concerned specifically with fire safety, protection and prevention in public accommodation houses, institutions for handicapped people and Government buildings, the findings of the committee

¹ New Zealand Statutes, The Fire Services Code of Practices 1965, pp. 2-3. The large tracts of coniferous forest in the central North Island pose a special fire problem, which is the responsibility of the Forest Service.

² The Napier earthquake (1931) was followed by widespread fire which added to the destruction and loss of life. The San Francisco earthquake (1906) was similar in this respect.

have an extended relevance as they particularly involve the local authorities' general responsibility for public safety.

In regard to fire legislation, the committee found a typical administrative problem with fourteen statutes, amendments and regulations relating to fire safety. This situation led the committee to comment that:

Even if the legislation on fire safety were "adequate", its "effectiveness" would tend to be diminished by dispersion. The law is so scattered throughout the Statute Book that only by good luck would most people be able to trace it to its 21 separate locations.¹

The implementation of New Zealand Standard Specification, NZSS 1900, already mentioned in respect to earthquake resistant building construction, came in for criticism. The committee noted that Chapter 5 of NZSS 1900 (Fire Resisting Construction and Means of Egress):

goes a long way towards meeting the general demand for standardisation of the law on fire safety but falls short of the ultimate goal. For one thing, a number of local authorities have not adopted NZSS 1900 ... The legislative standards on fire safety should be uniform throughout the country; consequently the model by-law on fire safety should be in force in every local authority area.²

Although the Municipal Corporations Act empowers the Minister of Internal Affairs 'to require a council to make by-laws, or to revoke, alter, or extend any by-laws regarding fire safety', this power has never been used.³ The Standards Association informed the committee that making the adoption of NZSS 1900 mandatory

¹ Report of the Committee of Inquiry, Fire Protection and Means of Escape in Buildings for Accommodation of the Public or Incapacitated Persons (Wellington, 1970), p. 34.

² Report of the Committee of Inquiry, pp. 41-42.

³ Ibid., p. 42.

"would be nibbling away at the authority of local bodies".¹

But, as the committee noted, 'as the legislature apprehends, compulsion may at times be necessary'.² From further submissions it was also pointed out that NZSS 1900:

related mainly to new buildings and dealt with their construction to the exclusion of their equipment; and adoption was a burdensome legal process anyway.³

To remedy the situation, the committee advanced a number of recommendations including the demand for uniformity in fire safety standards, that fire safety provisions be included in only two statutes, and the replacement of the local authority optional model by-law (NZSS 1900) with mandatory regulations under both statutes.

The committee also enquired into the 'co-ordination that exists between licensing authorities, local authorities and fire authorities'⁴ in respect to licensing and fire inspection, and found this to be inadequate. In this area, further problems were encountered with NZSS 1900, including difficulty of interpretation. The problem was 'compounded by the legion of officials throughout the country who have to give their own idea of what they mean'.⁵ It was also noted that 'some local authorities have engineers, some have building inspectors as well or instead, some have neither'.⁶ In respect to fire safety inspection it was again found that a multiplicity of poorly co-ordinated bodies were

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., p. 50.

⁵ Ibid., p. 53.

⁶ Ibid.

responsible - a situation which led the committee to recommend the establishment of a national fire safety inspectorate administered by the Fire Services Council.

Responsibility for the general situation revealed by the committee of enquiry rests with both local and central government. At a fundamental level, the unchecked growth in the number of ad hoc and territorial local authorities has led to a plethora, with the result that:

"While it can be claimed that many local authorities, both urban and rural, appear to function successfully under the present system it is equally true that there are many others ... unable to support a satisfactory administration or economically perform the multifarious duties which modern conditions demand."¹

Furthermore, the multiplicity of local authorities results in the inability to co-ordinate administrative responsibilities - in this particular context, fire safety.

Successive Governments, however, have exhibited a marked reluctance to impose structural reform upon local government, or to impose mandatory regulations. This has been apparent with NZSS 1900, and a parallel situation has occurred with local authority civil defence planning. The Civil Defence Act placed only a moral responsibility on the local authorities, with the result that in 1968, six years after the Act's passage, some 30 local authorities were still without civil defence plans.² This permissiveness on the part of central Government appears to be an acknowledgement of the status of local government, but it would seem that in areas of public safety a moral responsibility is

¹ A.J.H.R., Inquiry into the structure of local government, I.18, 1960, p. 13.

² For details see Chapter VI, p. 117.

insufficient. Yet, unless all local authorities are prepared to accept this type of responsibility, mandatory requirements or loss of functions appears inevitable.

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This chapter has attempted a brief and by no means exhaustive account of the character of natural disaster in New Zealand. Without doubt, earthquakes, because of their enormous destructive capacity and unpredictable occurrence, constitute the most serious threat. That is not, of course, to say anything new, the danger has been known since the earliest days of European settlement. Yet it is a measure of the country's concern that not until the mid-1960's was the need for a permanent emergency organisation to cope with the problem acknowledged.

The questions of anti-seismic building construction and fire safety have been discussed in some detail as these are two areas where the local authorities are able to promote environmental safety.¹ Insistence on a high standard of fire safety may prevent or confine an outbreak of fire, while the enforcement of stringent building regulations may help to reduce the death toll in an earthquake.

Combined with their responsibility for civil defence, the local authorities are therefore in an overall position to promote public safety, yet how seriously some take this responsibility is questionable.

¹ The other major area is local catchment board responsibility for flood prevention.

CHAPTER VI

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORGANISATION

In 1959 New Zealand had initiated the development of a civil defence organisation structured on three levels: national, regional and local. Officially, it was 'the United Kingdom model adapted to New Zealand conditions'.¹ But this was not entirely accurate. New Zealand had adopted the British model in 1940, a model which in the latter context had remained substantially unchanged throughout the post-war period. In 1959 this country in effect re-adopted the structure of its own wartime civil defence organisation.²

By the middle of 1960 the skeleton structure of the organisation was complete. The Ministry was established, Regional Commissioners appointed, and the local authorities informed of their general responsibilities.

Organisational development was to be based on the concept of utilising existing resources - the personnel and equipment of

¹ Ministry of Civil Defence, Civil Defence in New Zealand, p. 5.

² Some months after the establishment of the Ministry of Civil Defence the New Zealand Institute of Public Administration published the report of a study group which had considered the type of emergency organisation necessary to cope with both natural disaster and nuclear attack. See New Zealand Institute of Public Administration, 'Organisation for Disaster', N.Z.J.P.A., Vol. 22, No. 1, September 1959, pp. 51-54.

The study group recommended a three-tier structure, and only the nature of the regional element differed from the Government's proposals. It was suggested that regional areas should correspond to the 19 existing police districts. The report was inconclusive on the question of regional control, proposing that it rest with either the chief official of the largest town in each region or with the senior officer of police. With the benefit of hindsight, the regional approach adopted by the Government has proved successful, though the question of whether the police or the local authorities should retain control at the local level, an aspect which the report did not consider, is more debatable. For further discussion see Chapter VII, pp. 140-142.

Government departments, agencies and the local authorities during an emergency, rather than establishing an independent organisation with its own resources. By adopting this approach civil defence assumed a basically co-ordinating function and development at all levels of the organisation was directed towards this end.

With the exception of the regional element, however, progress with organisational development was almost non-existent prior to 1964, the result of the low priority afforded civil defence by the Government. Consequently, at no time during the early 1960's was the organisation in a position to cope with a serious emergency, whether in the form of a nuclear attack or a natural disaster.

The Regional Headquarters

As the Regional Commissioners were to assist the local authorities with establishing civil defence organisations, the development of the regional headquarters was given priority. At the first Ministry conference in June 1960 the functions of the Regional Commissioners were defined. These were to be: (a) Representation of the Ministry within the regions; (b) Promotion of civil defence and assisting the local authorities in establishing civil defence units; (c) Training; (d) The co-ordination of Government resources.¹

The second function at this stage was the most important. The last function was poorly defined, and this was recognised. The mobilisation of Government resources in a disaster was still based on the procedure detailed in Government Action in a Major Emergency (1954). This plan did not make provision for regional

¹ H.O.C.R., June, 1960.

co-ordination, and not until 1966 was it superseded by a new one. However, the problem was to some extent overcome by incorporating the co-ordinating functions of the Regional Commissioners and their headquarters in the Civil Defence Act.¹

Once the immediate functions of the Regional Commissioners had been defined, attention turned to the question of representation of Government departments on the regional headquarters. In most cases co-operation with civil defence was forthcoming; occasionally resistance to involvement occurred.

The Health Department was the first to be involved with regional planning, but, following inconclusive discussions, the Director considered that the composition of the regional headquarters should be decided at ministerial level.² The Regional Commissioners therefore requested representation from the three armed services, the Police, the Ministry of Works, the Fire Service, the Post Office, and the Departments of Health and Industries and Commerce.³ In July 1961, however, the Director informed the Regional Commissioners that a decision on the composition was to be their responsibility.⁴ Burrows took the opportunity to define the function of the regional headquarters which, he said, was:

To plan the co-ordination of the Government effort within its region in the event of an emergency, the action of any

¹ See Chapter III, p. 41.

² The Health Department representative stated on more than one occasion that it was necessary for the Ministry of Civil Defence to provide a policy for the co-ordination of Government departments with civil defence.

³ H.O.C.R., May, 1961.

⁴ Ibid., July, 1961.

department being subject always to any limitations imposed by its own higher authority.¹

Following a letter from the Minister of Civil Defence to the chief fire officers throughout the country asking for Fire Service participation on the regional headquarters, a representative of the Fire Service Council attended the July conference. He suggested that a regional fire officer with no operational control outside his own fire district should be appointed to the regional headquarters. But any system, he said, would require strict supervision as it would be dealing with a large number of volunteer fire brigades who would 'resent outside control'.² The Fire Service Council, he said, would set up a committee to study the problem. Nevertheless, negotiations with the Fire Service were to be protracted and a method of co-ordination between the Service and civil defence was not finally completed until 1967.

A representative of the R.N.Z.A.F. also attended the July conference. He explained that under the present air-force standing orders there would be little value in air-force representation on the regional headquarters, as all air traffic was under centralised control, 'and to be of value must stay that way'.³ Undeterred, the Regional Commissioners felt that they must have air advisers on the regional headquarters.

Regional representation was eventually completed during the drafting of the Civil Defence Bill when the decision was made to

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

create a national civil defence committee. Those on the three regional civil defence committees (R.C.D.C.) were to be nominated by each Government department represented on the N.C.D.C.,¹ but with the added provision that there could be 'such other persons as the Director appoints to ... the committee for the time being'.²

As the N.C.D.C. and R.C.D.C.'s were to be co-ordinating bodies it was necessary for their composition to be relatively uniform, though the added legislative provision gave the Regional Commissioners latitude in seconding further members.³

National Planning

The composition of the regional headquarters was finalised with the passage of the Civil Defence Act in December 1962, but the more complex problem of defining the operational roles of those Government departments and agencies involved with civil defence had not been considered in any detail.

In theory, the local authorities' demand for a co-ordinated central Government commitment to civil defence had been met with the passage of the Act. In practice, however, the Government was in no position to carry out its commitment. A comprehensive plan of Government action and a national headquarters to mobilise Government resources during an emergency did not exist. To fulfil

¹ For the functions and composition of the N.C.D.C. see Chapter III, p. 40.

² Civil Defence Act, 1962, s20, subss2.

³ For example, the regional civil defence committee Southern Region, has in addition to the district officers of those departments listed on the N.C.D.C., the following: The Chief Fire Officer of the Christchurch Metropolitan Fire Board, the District Officer of the Department of Internal Affairs, a nominee of the petroleum industry, and three military representatives - A.O.C. R.N.Z.A.F. Wigram, the Commander of the Southern Military District and the Resident Naval Officer.

these requirements and to define the operational roles of those departments involved with civil defence required the attention of the N.C.D.C., but the committee did not meet for the first time until early in 1964.

National planning was also handicapped by the lack of administrative capacity within the Ministry. The absence of a full-time directorate, indicative of the Ministry's low status, placed a heavy administrative burden upon the Regional Commissioners with the result that delays in decision-making were inevitable. It was for this reason that the composition of the regional headquarters had taken more than eighteen months to finalise.

The most urgent requirement confronting the Ministry was the need to replace Government Action in a Major Emergency (1954) which, although obsolete, was still in force. A major disaster involving central Government direction of the civil defence effort required a new plan.

At a conference in July 1963 Bourke pointed out that there were dangers in the continued existence of G.A.M.E. as it was the only written directive available to Government officers. In reply, the Director said that 'the terms and requirements of civil defence [as they affected Government departments] would have to be established by the N.C.D.C.'¹ The need for a meeting of the N.C.D.C. was stated bluntly in December 1963 when a Health Department representative said that his department would not become involved with civil defence until the N.C.D.C. had met. The

¹H.O.C.R., July, 1963.

hospitals, he stated, would not stockpile supplies for civil defence purposes 'until a policy had been decided, approved, and the money set aside for the purpose'.¹

Despite the urgent need for a meeting of the N.C.D.C., at no time during 1963 did the Regional Commissioners directly request one. When the committee did meet in February 1964, it was directly attributable to an enquiry made into civil defence administration by the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman's enquiry

The Ombudsman's enquiry into civil defence occurred when:

Several citizens expressed misgivings [to him] ... about the administration of the Civil Defence Act, and [he] noticed various press criticisms which had been appearing from time to time.²

Having considered the complaint was within his jurisdiction, the Ombudsman wrote to the Director of Civil Defence in September 1963:

Advising him of complaints that the administration was being less active than it should be in pressing for the preparation and approval of national civil defence plans and of local civil defence plans; and that there was too much secrecy surrounding civil defence so that the public as a whole were unaware of what their immediate responsibilities were.³

The Ombudsman noted that both the Director and Deputy Director had 'other important responsibilities' and were not able to devote a great deal of time to 'organising civil defence on a national level'.⁴ The Internal Affairs Department responsibility for organising the itineraries of distinguished visitors to the

¹ Ibid., December, 1963.

² A.J.H.R., Report of the Ombudsman, A.6, 1964, p. 35.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 35-36.

country was considered by the Ombudsman to be 'an additional inhibiting factor'.¹

Following the initial correspondence, the Ombudsman interviewed the Director who expressed some doubts over the Ombudsman's jurisdiction 'but conceded the validity of [his] view that a "matter of administration" must include a failure to administer'.² The Director explained that the N.C.D.C. had not met because:

In his judgement it was desirable that the local civil defence schemes should first be advanced to a stage where there was an organisation in existence.³

The Ombudsman also enquired about 'directives to Government departments'. To this the Director replied that he had 'personally written to every permanent head requesting fullest assistance to Regional Commissioners in regional and local schemes'.⁴ He added that:

Civil defence could proceed only as far as and as fast as the availability of staff and finance permitted, and in the ultimate must depend wholly on the interest which the public itself takes in it at the local level.⁵

Although the Director had decided to call a meeting of the N.C.D.C. in January 1964, the Ombudsman, having seen further press criticism which he felt had validity:

Considered that the answers previously given to [his] questions had become progressively less valid as time went on and that by now sections 10-13 of the Civil Defence Act should be put into active administration.⁶

¹ Ibid., p. 36.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Although the Ombudsman 'realised the difficulty of a reluctant public' he pointed out that the:

Government and Parliament had been sufficiently aware of the needs of the situation to pass the comprehensive Act, and ... felt that it was indeed the duty of the responsible Department to administer the Act effectively. If adequate staff and funds were not available then it was the duty of the Director to make the appropriate representations to his Minister.¹

The Ombudsman's enquiry was a severe indictment of civil defence administration and exposed the Ministry's failure to undertake the obligations imposed upon it by the Civil Defence Act. In particular, the Director's claim that a meeting of the N.C.D.C. was necessary only when 'there was an organisation in existence' was to argue in a vicious circle, for an adequate emergency organisation could not be developed without establishing a co-ordinated system of Government support for the local authorities and this required the urgent attention of the N.C.D.C.

Parliament did not find time to debate the enquiry when the Ombudsman's report was tabled in 1964 and the subject was raised only briefly when A.M. Findlay (Labour, Waitakere) said: 'The report presented a view of the Ombudsman's activities which went rather further than was contemplated in the Act and began to invade the function of Parliament itself'.² More to the point, the Ombudsman had succeeded where Parliament had failed. The enquiry, however, spurred civil defence development particularly at the national level though it did little to improve the already poor image of civil defence in the country.

¹ Ibid.

² N.Z.P.D., Vol. 339, p. 1055, 4 August, 1964.

'Government Action in Major Disaster'

The N.C.D.C. convened for the first time on 17 February 1964, fifteen months after the passage of the Civil Defence Act, and it was to this meeting that the newly appointed Minister of Civil Defence, D.C. Seath, elaborated the 'new' natural disaster priority of the organisation.¹

In its administrative capacity, the N.C.D.C. was to be assisted by planning committees which would consider special civil defence problems, including the operational responsibilities of the various Government departments, and the provision of 'guidelines' on particular aspects of local authority planning.

The first meeting of the N.C.D.C. decided the number of planning committees required, and sent a report to the Minister asking him to seek Cabinet approval for the functions of the ten departments represented on the N.C.D.C.² The committee also established a national plans co-ordinating committee, responsible for integrating the work of the individual planning committees into a national scheme, and producing a new plan detailing Government direction of the civil defence effort in a major disaster.³

The need to replace Government Action in a Major Emergency (1954) had first been discussed in July 1963. In October of the same year, the Regional Commissioners were informed that a new plan had been submitted to the Director for his consideration.⁴ In December, they were further informed that the plan still

¹For details see Chapter IV, p. 68.

²A total of 10 planning committees was established.

³For the composition of the national plans co-ordinating committee see Chapter IV, p. 68 footnote 6.

⁴H.O.C.R., October, 1963.

required the Director's decision, and that important issues were involved, including constitutional matters which would require Cabinet approval. Bourke, who was to be the most vocal critic of the plan, said that he wanted it to detail Government action in a wartime situation, provide alternative sites for the Government, and explain how Government departments would delegate their powers.¹

Drafting the plan, it appears, was begun again following the first meeting of the national plans co-ordinating committee, and a 'first draft' of Government Action in Major Disaster (G.A.M.D.) did not appear until April 1965.

The order of reference for G.A.M.D. was planning 'Government Action in National Emergency and Major Disaster',² but as the national plans co-ordinating committee had previously decided that a nuclear attack on New Zealand was no longer a possibility, only the latter aspect of the terms of reference was dealt with.³

G.A.M.D. was based on the assumption of a 'major disaster' which required Government direction of civil defence operations.⁴ For reasons of morale the plan stated that the Government would remain in Wellington, though provision was made for its removal to a field location if necessary. Overall responsibility for civil defence would rest with a small Cabinet sub-committee, while an operational group would direct the civil defence effort.⁵

¹ Ibid., December, 1963.

² Ministry of Civil Defence, Government Action in Major Disaster (Wellington, 1966), p. 2.

³ For details see Chapter IV, pp. 68-69.

⁴ For the definition of a 'major disaster' see Chapter IV, p. 71.

⁵ The operational group was a contracted version of the N.C.D.C. (See Fig. V.)

Below the national headquarters¹ would be the existing structure of the regional headquarters and the local authorities. (See Fig. V.)

The second part of the plan dealt with the functions of the regional headquarters and the local authorities, functions which were already known. An appendix prescribed the responsibilities of those Government departments and agencies involved with civil defence.²

Following the appearance of the first draft of G.A.M.D. in April 1965, Bourke commented:

I think the paper is too long ... It seems to me that while the concept of the Government field committee has been at last laid low,³ this report has not yet clearly established the principle that civil defence operations to cope with a major disaster ... cannot be centrally directed. Success in dealing with the life saving phase of any operation must depend upon the initiative of those at the scene and this requires a clear and widespread delegation of authority from central Government to local government, and from the headquarters of government departments to branches ... The general impression which the paper leaves me with is that the concept of G.A.M.E. is still very much in the foreground ... I do not believe there is anything to be gained by attempts to set up temporary Government headquarters ... outside Wellington. If ... a disaster should overwhelm Wellington ... the only sensible procedure would be to re-establish government ... at Auckland.⁴

As a plan, G.A.M.D. was over-centralised and there appeared to be some conflict between the plan and the assumptions on which it was based. A major disaster requiring central Government

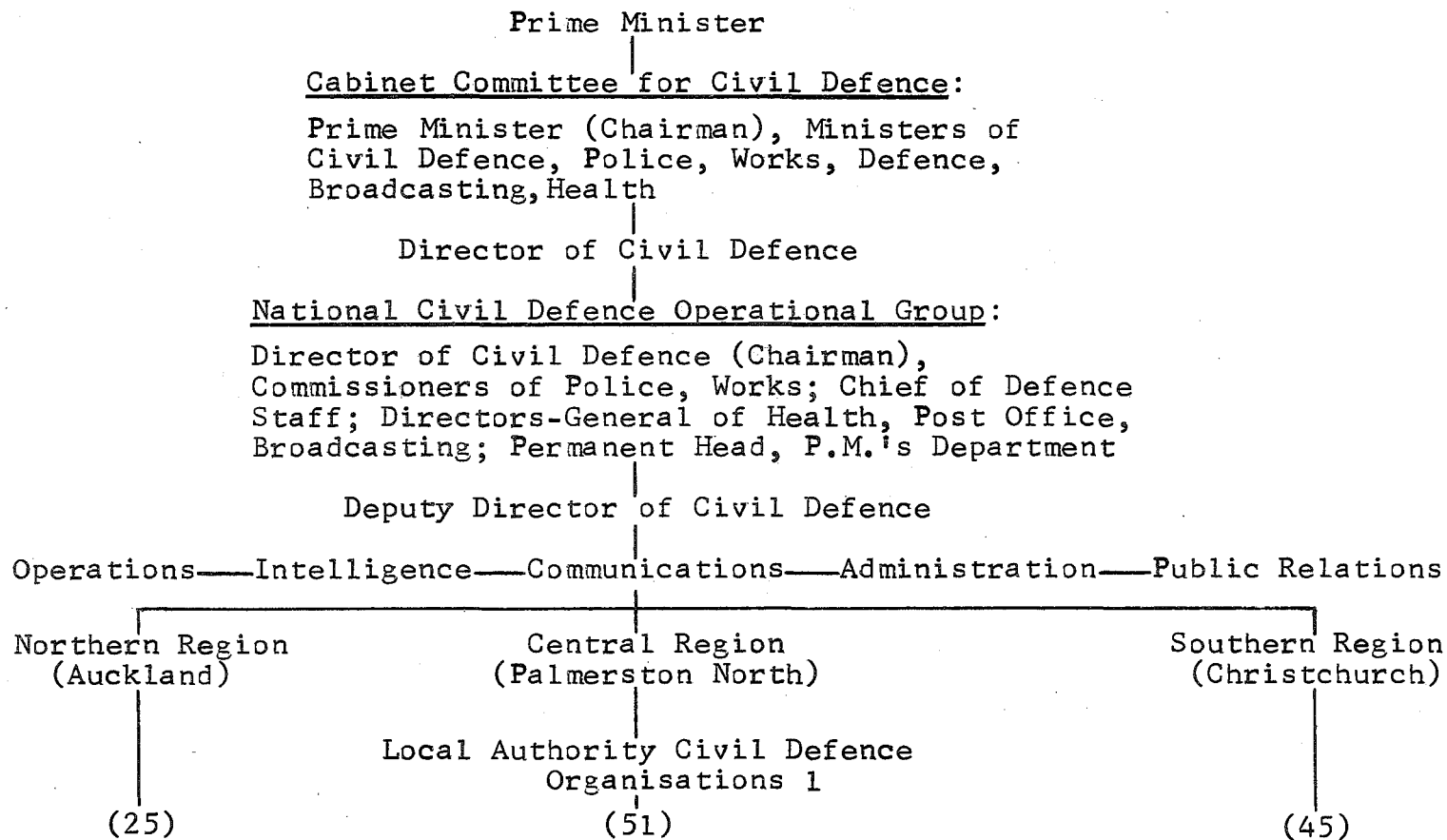
¹ National headquarters would be located in the basement of Broadcasting House, Wellington, and later transferred to the 'beehive' extension of Parliament buildings when completed.

² These had been approved by Cabinet in March 1964.

³ G.A.M.E. (1954) made provision for a Government field committee. See Chapter I, p. 18.

⁴ Regional Commissioner, Northern Region, to the Director of Civil Defence and other Regional Commissioners, Letter, 6 May, 1965.

Figure V: GOVERNMENT ACTION IN A MAJOR DISASTER - COMMAND STRUCTURE



1 Number of local civil defence organisations as at 31 March 1968.

direction was assumed to be one affecting the central area of New Zealand. It would seem, however, that a disaster of such magnitude could seriously affect Wellington and in all probability make Government direction of civil defence difficult, if not impossible.

The question of regional government, in the event of Wellington being destroyed, had been considered before, but had never proceeded beyond the discussion stage. Yet, one of the reasons for basing Central Region headquarters on Palmerston North in 1960 was that Wellington had at that time been defined as a 'target zone'.¹ Although circumstances had now changed, the rationale was still applicable. If Wellington were incapacitated by a natural disaster, civil defence operations could be directed from Palmerston North with support from the other regions.

Bourke continued his criticism of G.A.M.D. in March 1966 when he expressed to the other Regional Commissioners the view that the plan placed too much emphasis on Wellington and failed to give sufficient details of how the various Government departments were to support civil defence. He reiterated the contention that the national headquarters should be transferred to Auckland in the event of Wellington being destroyed. Herrick,² however, considered that national control should be at Palmerston North. Burrows felt the question of regional government should be dealt with in a separate section of G.A.M.D. Notwithstanding the criticism of the plan, the Director considered that it fulfilled

¹ See Chapter IV, p. 60.

² Peren had retired as Regional Commissioner for the Central Region at the end of 1964. He was replaced by Captain T.D. Herrick.

an urgent need and should be regarded 'as a directive rather than a hard and fast plan'.¹

National Plans

During the course of 1965 the results of the work done by the national planning committees began to appear, and by 1967 a total of ten plans had been produced, most of which provided basic civil defence information for the local authorities.²

¹ H.O.C.R., March, 1966.

² Four of the plans, Traffic Control, Supply, Evacuation, and Welfare, provided information essentially for the local authorities. The Traffic Control Plan listed the traffic control districts throughout the country. The Evacuation and its complementary Welfare Plan described methods for dealing with large numbers of homeless people. The Supply Plan listed the quantities of foodstuffs, clothing, etc. available at commercial organisations throughout the country. The Medical Plan explained the co-ordination between the Health Department and civil defence, and also described the procedure for dealing with casualties and maintaining public health. The Law and Order Plan described the role of the Police during a disaster. This was to be the maintenance of order and the identification and disposal of the dead.

A Transport Plan and two Communications Plans rather more approximated the term 'plan'. The former described the alternative transport resources which could be drawn upon during a disaster. The latter explained the alternative methods of communication which could be utilised throughout the country, and the communications to be used at the national and regional civil defence headquarters.

The Fire Fighting Services Plan was the last of the national plans to be produced. Negotiations between civil defence and the Fire Service had been proceeding intermittently since 1961. They had been protracted, not only because of their infrequency but the reluctance on the part of the Fire Service to being brought into the civil defence line of control. Eventually a compromise was reached:

Fire Fighting Forces will be under their own separate and autonomous command but will work in alliance with other Civil Defence operational groups and will conform to policy decisions and directions of the Civil Defence organisation - Ministry of Civil Defence, Fire Fighting Services Plan (Wellington, 1967), p. 1.

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A combination of factors had stimulated the more rapid development of civil defence after 1964. The Ombudsman's enquiry, though embarrassing, provided the initial impetus. The appointment of a new and more capable Minister of Civil Defence was also a contributing factor and, following a recommendation from the Regional Commissioners, a permanent full-time Director was appointed at the end of 1964, providing a much needed increase in administrative capacity at the national level.

Although the basic structure of civil defence was a wartime adaptation it provided a rational system for dealing with natural disaster. Overseas experience with such events indicates that 'the major problems which confront a government in a disaster situation are those of co-ordination'.¹ Ensuring effective co-ordination had been, for a number of reasons, a dominant consideration in the development of New Zealand civil defence. Firstly, the organisation had been developed on a three-tier structure, national, regional and local - a disjunct structure which required co-ordination between the components. Secondly, the structure was constitutionally dichotomous as it incorporated both central and local government. The relationship between the two branches of Government required co-ordination rather than hierarchical direction.² Thirdly, and more importantly, civil defence was not

¹ J.M. Power and R.L. Wettenhall, 'Bureaucracy and Disaster - II', Public Administration: The Journal of the Australian Regional Groups of the Royal Institute of Public Administration, Vol. XXIX, No. 2, June 1970, p. 181. This article is a study of the response to the 1967 Tasmanian bushfires.

² Where a local authority declares a state of local civil defence emergency, the decision to call upon regional assistance is that of the local authority. Where a state of national civil defence emergency is declared, the local authorities would automatically be directed from above.

intended to be an exclusive disaster organisation but a co-ordinating body.

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Developments at the local authority level

From the outset the local authorities had been generally sympathetic to the need for civil defence though they had shown no obvious enthusiasm and were particularly critical of proposed methods for financing the scheme.¹

Although the Ministry had considered that the local authorities had an obligation to establish civil defence organisations, initially there had been a marked reluctance to exert pressure. Early in 1961, the Minister had informed the Regional Commissioners that:

He did not want local authorities to be coerced into organising local civil defence schemes and thought the best approach was through the peaceful penetration of the Regional Commissioners which seemed to be having good results.²

During the passage of the Civil Defence Bill, a firmer line had been taken. The Local Bills committee had included coercive provisions in the legislation, and the Minister had stated that 'local authorities must have their plans prepared and approved within a year of the Act's passage'.³ The Minister's mandatory 'must', however, contrasted with the permissive 'shall' of the Act.

The Act was, nevertheless, a visible sign of progress though it did not provide the local authorities with details of how local

¹ See Chapter II, pp. 26 ff.

² H.O.C.R., May, 1961.

³ N.Z.P.D., Vol. 332, p. 2502, 7 November, 1962.

organisations were to be established.¹ This demand was eventually met with the distribution of the Civil Defence Planning Guide for Local Authorities, in July 1963 and supplemented with the various national plans which appeared after 1965.

With the provision of the 'planning guide' and the passing of the Civil Defence Act the Minister considered that a sufficient 'lead' had been given and he warned the Municipal Association in 1963 that if the local authorities showed any reluctance in undertaking their responsibilities:

He would not like to be placed in the position of having to recommend to the Government the imposition of penal provisions on local authorities because of their failure to undertake this responsibility.²

The President of the Municipal Association saw the situation in a different light:

With the passing of the Civil Defence Act in December, 1962, an additional burden, both financial and administrative was placed on our members.³

During the previous four years numerous remits had been passed by the annual conferences of both local government associations, requesting Government financial assistance for civil defence. Some were general requests, for example: 'that the Government be asked to provide financial assistance towards the establishment of civil defence organisations'.⁴ Others were more specific, for

¹ The Civil Defence Act laid down only the powers and general responsibilities of the local authorities. See Chapter III, pp. 42-43.

² New Zealand Municipal Association, Proceedings of the Fiftieth Conference, 1963, p. 14.

³ New Zealand Municipal Association, Proceedings of the Fifty-first Conference, 1964, p. 21.

⁴ New Zealand Counties Association, Proceedings of the Thirty-seventh Conference, 1962, p. 99.

example: 'that the Government be urged to face up to its responsibilities to meet out of pocket expenses for those people who by reason of involvement in civil defence organisations face loss of wages in their normal work'.¹ On all occasions the Government rejected the remits, and the impasse led the President of the Municipal Association to declare in 1965 that:

Government has made it abundantly clear that it regards the organisation of civil defence as a local body responsibility and so the executive has come to the conclusion that there is no point in further pressing this matter [of financial assistance].²

If external pressure were not successful, eventually, internal pressure was. In March 1964, the Regional Commissioners informed the Minister that the Government 'should consider giving "more" assistance to the local authorities now that local authority plans had been approved'.³ The Minister said he would consider putting a case before Cabinet. But not until over two years later, in October 1966, did Cabinet approve subsidies on certain items of civil defence expenditure for those local authorities with civil defence plans.⁴ At a later date it was revealed that the Treasury had opposed the subsidies, and the Director admitted they were 'the best they could get'; a claim to have them made retrospective had been refused.⁵

¹ New Zealand Municipal Association, Proceedings of the Fifty-first Conference, 1964, p. 104.

² New Zealand Municipal Association, Proceedings of the Fifty-second Conference, 1965, p. 21.

³ H.O.C.R., March, 1964.

⁴ Subsidies were on a \$ for \$ basis. At 31 March 1968 approval had been given for a total of \$21,175 in subsidies - A.J.H.R., Report of the Department of Internal Affairs, H.22, 1968, p. 19.

⁵ H.O.C.R., October, 1966.

The subsidies went some way to satisfying local authority demands, though in 1967 and again in 1968 a number of remits were passed at the local government conferences requesting extension of the subsidies to cover the payment of permanent local authority civil defence officers. The requests were promptly refused on economic grounds. But following the disasters which struck the country early in 1968, the question of extending financial assistance was hurriedly reappraised.

An example of a local civil defence organisation

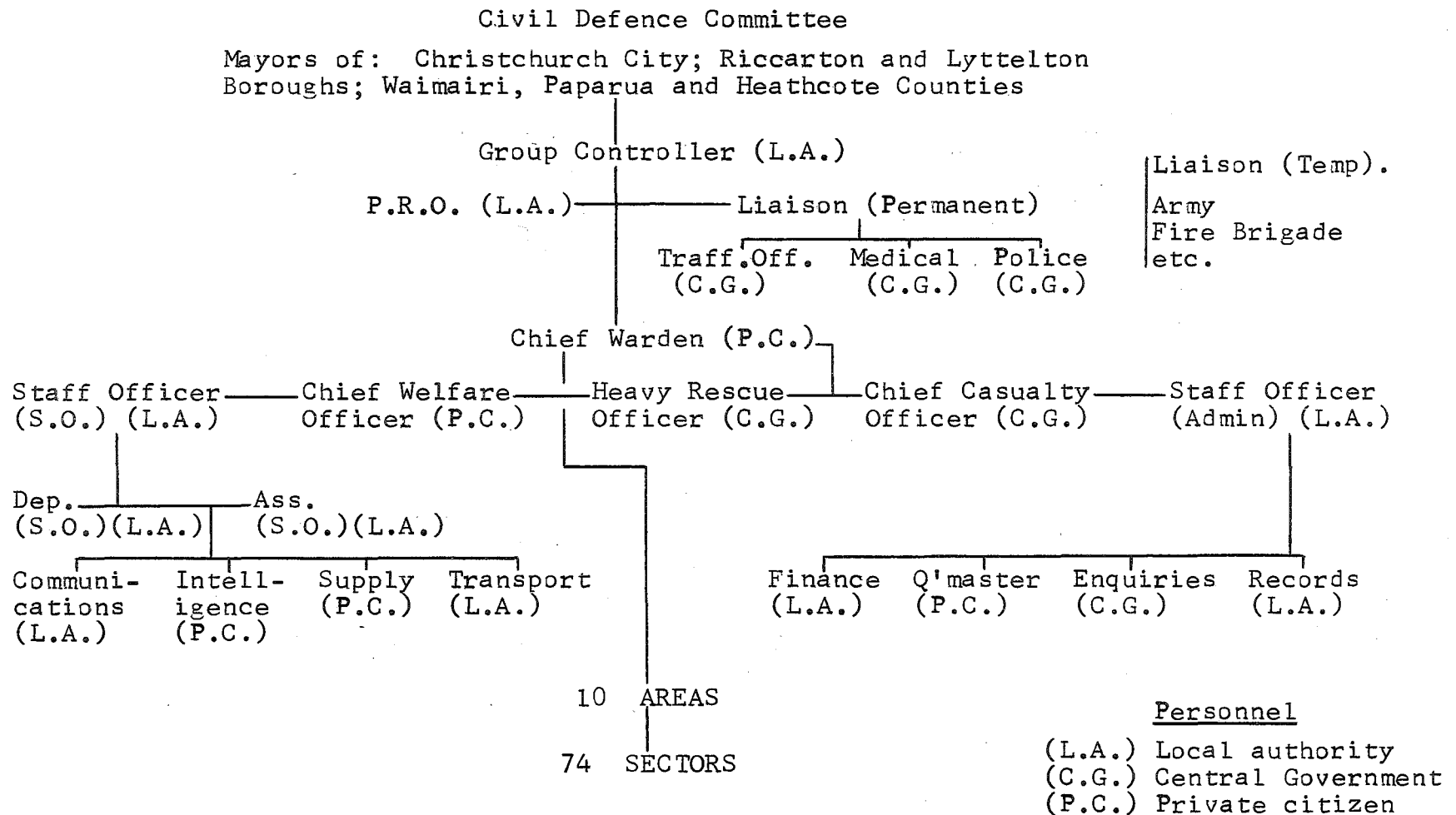
The Christchurch Combined District civil defence organisation incorporates the six territorial local authorities in the area and was one of the first South Island organisations with an approved civil defence plan.¹

In the event of an emergency, overall responsibility is vested in a committee of the six local authority mayors, while operational control is exercised by a group controller through a central headquarters manned by the heads of the various civil defence sections and liaison officers from the emergency utilities. (See Fig. VI.)

For operational purposes the city is subdivided into ten areas, each with a headquarters. The areas in turn are subdivided into a total of 74 sectors, each of which is the responsibility of a warden. The sector posts, based on state primary schools, are intended to provide the basic level of contact between civil defence and the public and act as focal points for rescue and

¹ Although the Civil Defence Act provides for the triennial review of plans by the Regional Commissioners, this, of course, cannot guarantee their effectiveness.

Figure VI: CHRISTCHURCH COMBINED DISTRICT CIVIL DEFENCE ORGANISATION



relief operations.¹

The rationale underlying the system is that in the event of a disaster the resources of the normal emergency utilities would be overwhelmed and, therefore, the resources of the whole community must be brought to bear.

As well as having the resources of the public utilities and the civil defence organisation itself, the controller is empowered also to requisition private resources but, should the organisation be unable to cope or require specialised assistance, support from the Regional Commissioner can be called upon.

In theory the system is sound. In practice, however, the ability of civil defence to cope effectively with a disaster is questionable. Since the organisation's inception priority has been given to the establishment of a warden system within the suburban areas. But this has been to ignore the special problem of the central business district where the high population concentration, particularly during working hours, and the preponderance of old buildings would, in the event of a severe earthquake, inevitably result in a high casualty rate.

Even within the suburban areas, the credibility for civil defence is doubtful. Under present instructions, the public, in the event of an emergency, are asked to contact their nearest warden post if they require help or can offer assistance. The existing distribution of warden posts, however, places most of the population at some distance from them; a fact which must inevitably reduce their utility as focal points for rescue and

¹Utilising state primary schools as sector posts is national policy.

relief operations. In order to provide effective coverage it would appear necessary to extend the warden system down to the block, if not individual street level. Ideally, every street could contain a nucleus of people capable of forming an emergency team in the event of a disaster.

With the existing system, however, there exists a fundamental problem, and one which is not confined to Christchurch. This is the lack of public awareness of the function of civil defence.

The level of public awareness

The only purpose of civil defence is to provide help in time of crisis, yet, since its inception little attempt has been made at both the national and local levels to publicise civil defence; with the result that the public appear largely unaware of its function.

In Christchurch, for example, a random sample of 162 people in the St. Albans electoral district found that 70 percent of the respondents did not know the location of their nearest warden post.¹ A more comprehensive survey carried out in the South Island town of Blenheim (population 12,000), though covering fewer respondents, found that 80 percent were unaware of the location of their nearest warden post.²

In Blenheim, public knowledge of the local civil defence organisation was found to be very limited. Fifty-four percent of the sample thought the police were responsible for civil defence, while only 25 percent knew that it was a local authority responsi-

¹For full details see Appendix A.

²In Christchurch, sector posts are marked with signs; in Blenheim they are not.

bility. In the event of a disaster 27 percent said they would turn to the police for help while 24 percent said they would contact their sector warden. Yet, of the 24 percent, only 30 percent of that number in fact knew the location of their sector warden.¹

If the lack of public recognition for the role of civil defence apparent in Blenheim and Christchurch applies in other centres, it is doubtful whether any local organisation would at present be able to achieve the level of social control necessary for it to cope effectively with a major disaster in an urban area.

Progress with local authority planning

Although the Civil Defence Act only stipulated that local authorities 'shall' plan for civil defence, once the necessary planning details had been provided, most showed a readiness to undertake their responsibilities. By 1964 80 civil defence organisations were in existence incorporating 223 local authorities.² Over the next three years a steady increase occurred, though by 1968 some 30 local authorities were still without plans.

The Ministry, however, was in a difficult position to impose mandatory provisions on the recalcitrant local authorities. Not only was the Ministry conditioned by its own cautious approach, but any action would almost inevitably be regarded as interference

¹For full details see Appendix B, Questions I, II, III, IV.

²New Zealand local authorities have consistently shown a marked reluctance to amalgamate despite frequent reform attempts by central Government. Surprisingly, the provision in the Civil Defence Act permitting local authorities to combine for civil defence purposes has met with considerable success. At 31 March 1968, 25 organisations existed in the Northern Region incorporating 72 local authorities; 51 organisations existed in the Central Region incorporating 75 local authorities; 45 organisations existed in the Southern Region incorporating 94 local authorities.

in local authority affairs, particularly as it had been stressed that local civil defence was their responsibility - an argument which had consistently been used to justify the rejection of requests for financial assistance. Ironically, the emergencies which occurred early in 1968 and were to test civil defence on a major scale for the first time, also provided the Government with the political opportunity to impose mandatory civil defence requirements on the local authorities.

* * *

CHAPTER VII

1968: CIVIL DEFENCE IN ACTIONThe April Storm

From 9 to 15 April 1968 a cyclonic storm which produced the most severe weather conditions ever recorded in New Zealand, passed across the North and South Islands causing widespread damage to property and communications. The damage on land, however, was overshadowed by the loss of 51 lives when the inter-island ferry 'Wahine' sank at the entrance to Wellington harbour at the height of the storm.¹

Storm warnings had been issued by the meteorological service as early as 6 April and the national headquarters of civil defence was notified before the storm reached the northern part of the country.²

At first the storm followed a southerly track along the east coast of the North Island, but during the night of 9 April it intensified, changed track, and arrived unexpectedly over the Wellington area in the early morning of 10 April.

In Wellington, winds gusting to 146 knots were recorded, and in the southern and exposed suburbs of the city numerous houses were severely damaged. The storm caught local civil defence organisations unprepared, and only in the borough of Upper Hutt, twenty miles north of Wellington, was a state of local disaster declared. The Mayor of Wellington decided against making a

¹For details of this disaster see A.J.H.R., T.E.V. Wahine, Shipping Casualty, 10 April 1968, Report of Court and Annex thereto, H.51, 1969.

²It appears that the only warning issued by the national headquarters was to catchment authorities in the Auckland area.

declaration as it would have required the evacuation of places of work, bringing people out onto the windswept and debris-strewn streets.

Following its southerly track, the storm reached Christchurch during the night of 10-11 April. The major threat facing the city was the heavy rain associated with the storm coinciding with a high tide, and flooding the low-lying coastal suburbs of New Brighton and Sumner. Fortunately, major flooding did not occur, though some exposed hillside houses were damaged by wind and ground subsidence. At all times during the night the police, assisted by army units which they had called in, remained in charge and a declaration of disaster was not made.

The Leader of the Opposition, N.E. Kirk, who was in Christchurch at the time of the storm, criticised the failure to activate the civil defence organisation. Although later informed of the overall situation, Kirk claimed on the following day that 'civil defence needs an urgent re-examination and a pretty sharp shakeup if last night's sorry episode is not to be repeated', and called for the resignation of the Minister of Civil Defence.¹

The storm continued its southerly track after passing over Christchurch, and though declining in intensity, continued to bring heavy rainfall. In Southland, the Mataura River reached its highest level in 55 years and a declaration of disaster was made in the Gore-Mataura area where the evacuation of threatened houses took place. In the township of Wyndham, a declaration was not made but 700 people were evacuated by a joint effort of civil

¹Reported in The Press, Christchurch, 13 April, 1968.

defence and the police.¹

The April storm provoked a renewed, though critical interest in the state of civil defence - an interest which had been almost non-existent during the preceding years. The most vocal critic was the Leader of the Opposition who, following a meeting of the Labour party caucus, said that 'civil defence should rid itself of its pseudo-military background', and added that the police should be in control during an emergency.² The Mayor of Hamilton echoed Kirk's remarks, saying 'I firmly believe that the police are still the best-trained and the best able to direct and take command in emergencies such as we have just had'.³

The Prime Minister considered it necessary to take responsibility for the criticism, admitting 'it was apparent that in some places the civil defence organisations were not adequate to meet situations such as the gales of the past few days'.⁴ At a later date the Minister of Civil Defence agreed 'that the civil defence system had failed because there had not been a lead from the capital which could have been followed through on a national basis'.⁵ This was apparently a reference to the Ministry's failure to provide warnings to civil defence organisations in

¹ The township of Wyndham forms part of the Southland County which is administered from Invercargill. At the time of the flooding, County officials able to declare a state of disaster were out of the area and the civil defence warden in Wyndham was reluctant to do so. The Superintendent of the Invercargill Police district proceeded to Wyndham and with the civil defence warden decided to evacuate the area, but without declaring an emergency.

² Reported in The Press, Christchurch, 22 April, 1968.

³ Ibid., 18 April, 1968.

⁴ Ibid., 17 April, 1968.

⁵ Ibid., 19 April, 1968.

areas likely to be affected by the storm.

Because of the demand for a review of civil defence activities during the storm, a conference of Ministry personnel was promptly held, and a number of recommendations for improving the effectiveness of the organisation were made.¹ These were: (a) Better administrative arrangements to ensure that any warning of an impending disaster was passed immediately to the Ministry of Civil Defence. (b) Any warning so received was to be passed immediately to the Regional Commissioners and the local authorities who would be advised to alert key members in their civil defence organisations.² (c) Early activation of national and regional headquarters. (d) The local authorities be recommended to declare a state of disaster if there was an imminent threat of one. (e) Better arrangements to keep the public informed. It was also announced that the Government would consider extending its subsidy scheme to encourage more local authorities to employ paid civil defence officers.³ Changes to the wording of the Civil Defence Act were also proposed in an attempt to overcome the evident local authority reluctance to issue declarations of emergency.

The Inangahua earthquake was to interrupt the implementation of the legislative reforms though during the intervening period discussions as to the adequacy of the Civil Defence Act were held

¹Details of the recommendations taken from The Press, Christchurch, 19 April, 1968.

²The New Zealand Meteorological Service now advises the Ministry of Civil Defence of unusually severe weather conditions which may have a reasonably high possibility of creating an emergency. At his discretion the Director of Civil Defence alerts the Regional Commissioners who are then responsible for notifying the local authorities.

³The scheme was introduced on 1 April 1969. The salaries of full-time local authority civil defence officers are subsidised by the Government on a \$ for \$ basis.

between the Regional Commissioners and the local authorities.

Although civil defence operations during the Inangahua earthquake were to prove successful, this disaster added further impetus to the need for legislative reforms, and shortly after the termination of the emergency the Regional Commissioners conferred with the Director and Secretary of Civil Defence.

It was generally agreed that the reluctance of the local authorities to declare emergencies during the April storm had resulted from 'a lack of knowledge of the Act, and/or a lack of confidence in the local civil defence plan'.¹ From a meeting with civil defence controllers in his region, Herrick concluded that many had not read the Act.

Following a proposal from Burrows the conference decided that the word 'disaster' should be replaced in the Act by 'emergency' as the latter term was less emotive and might, for psychological reasons, make it easier for a local authority to make a declaration. Although under existing legislation a civil defence organisation could be activated without a declaration, members would not be protected against liability or for compensation. This problem, it was felt, could be overcome by extending existing provisions in the Act.

The other major amendment to the legislation arose from the demand to make local authority civil defence planning mandatory. At 31 March 1968 some 30 local authorities, all but one in the North Island, were still without civil defence plans. With the renewed concern for civil defence it appeared an opportune time to force the recalcitrant local authorities into accepting their

¹ H.O.C.R., June, 1968.

responsibilities.¹

The Inangahua Earthquake²

At 5.24 a.m. on 24 May 1968 a severe earthquake³ occurred on the West Coast of the South Island, its epicenter located a few miles north of the small township of Inangahua.⁴ Widespread deformation of the landscape took place and severe damage occurred to buildings, roads, railways and telegraphic communication within the area. Fortunately, only two deaths occurred when a landslip demolished a farm house.

At the time of the earthquake two civil defence organisations existed within the area: the Buller Combined District centred on Westport and the Inangahua County organisation centred on Reefton. Both organisations, however, were in a moribund state. Although Inangahua possessed a civil defence plan the organisation was in the process of being reconstructed as a number of personnel had

¹The method for achieving this was clumsy. The Civil Defence Amendment Act, 1968, stipulated that all local authorities were to have plans completed and approved by 31 December 1969. Where this provision was not complied with the appropriate Regional Commissioner would then prepare a plan for the recalcitrant local authority, the cost of doing so being recoverable from the local authority. It is difficult to see how such action would result in the local authority having an effective civil defence organisation. See Civil Defence Act, 1962, s28A.

²This account is based on the following sources: Ministry of Civil Defence, Report of the Inangahua Earthquake, New Zealand, May 1968 (Wellington, 1970); Bulletin of the New Zealand Society for Earthquake Engineering, Vol. 2, No. 1, February 1969; discussions with Brigadier J.T. Burrows, Regional Commissioner, Southern Region, Christchurch, and Mr. G. Evans, Department of Civil Engineering, Canterbury University.

³The earthquake registered 7.0 on the Richter Scale and a maximum intensity of X on the Modified Mercalli Scale. The epicenter was located 25 miles from that of the 1929 Murchison earthquake which had registered 7.6 on the Richter Scale.

⁴Inangahua (pop. 202) is a small railway junction and the site of a Ministry of Works depot, a timber mill, and an Electricity Department substation.

left the district. The Buller plan was only in the drafting stages, though some personnel had been appointed to the organisation.

Rescue Phase

The Inangahua township was completely isolated by the earthquake, with the first news of the disaster coming from the N.Z.B.C. at 6.30 a.m. after widespread earth tremors had been felt throughout the North and South Islands, though the actual location of the earthquake was at that time unknown. The first contact from Inangahua with the outside world was made over an Electricity Department mobile radio to Waimangaroa.¹ Contact was later established with Gisborne over a Ministry of Works (M.O.W.) radio; the message being relayed to the M.O.W. in Westport.

The Electricity Department in Nelson, realising something was amiss at the Inangahua substation, despatched engineers by helicopter who arrived at the township at 9.50 a.m. After picking up an injured woman, the helicopter continued to Reefton where it uplifted a County official and proceeded to reconnoitre the disaster area.

At Reefton, 25 miles from Inangahua, considerable damage was sustained and civil defence operations began almost immediately after the earthquake occurred. Under the control of the County foreman, groups of men proceeded to work around the town demolishing unsafe chimneys and covering damaged roofs.

As the County chairman, who was also the civil defence controller, could not be contacted at his home sixteen miles away,

¹Waimangaroa - a small township north of Westport.

the town clerk assumed his duties and until late in the morning the police station acted as the centre for civil defence operations.

Because of telephone and power failures, contact could not be established with the outside world, though the local traffic officer ascertained that the road to Christchurch was open although those to Inangahua and Greymouth were found to be closed. By radio he was able to make contact with the Traffic Department in Greymouth.

At 8.30 a.m. the Inangahua County chairman arrived at Reefton, having travelled by 'foot, bicycle, landrover and Post Office van'.¹ At this time a M.O.W. radio in Reefton picked up reports of casualties in Inangahua and it was later decided to send rescue parties to the township. Two parties made their way independently; a police group from Greymouth which was the first to arrive, and a civil defence party from Reefton. As a gradual picture of the situation developed the County chairman decided to declare a state of local major disaster at 11 a.m., and shortly afterwards, contact via the Railways telephone system was made with the Regional Commissioner, Southern Region, in Christchurch.

Following the declaration, a civil defence headquarters was established in a disused Forestry school and registration and welfare facilities were set up in the nearby school hostel. However, as eight of the twelve members of the organisation were unavailable, new members had to be recruited to take charge of the various sections of civil defence operations.

¹ Ministry of Civil Defence, Report on the Inangahua Earthquake, p. 17.

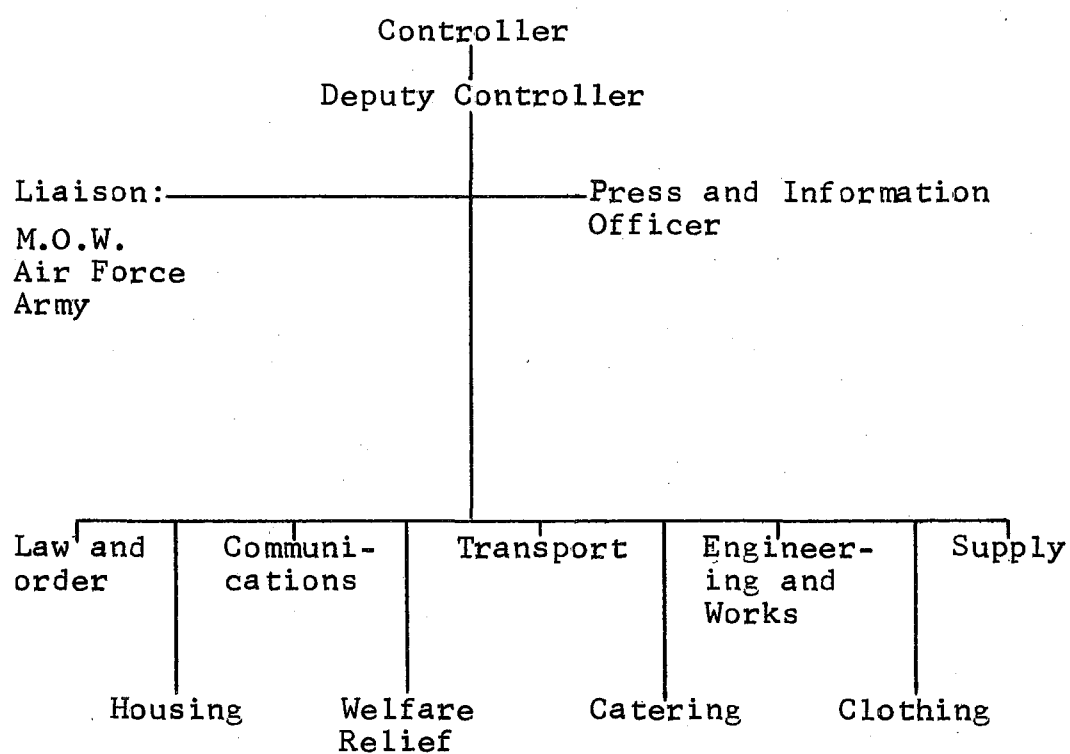
Following the arrival of the rescue parties at Inangahua, an inspection of the area revealed that most houses were uninhabitable, and that the state of the water and sewerage systems posed a threat to health. Also, there was a danger of flooding in the area as the Buller River had been dammed by a landslip during the earthquake. A decision was therefore made to evacuate the township. Two private helicopters, at that time in the area, began the evacuation, but as there was an urgent demand for further capacity, a request for assistance was passed to the Regional Commissioner. Two additional private helicopters were made available and late in the afternoon two large air-force machines arrived on the scene. To fully utilise air capacity, evacuees were flown out to a point some miles from Reefton, then transported to the town by road. Once in Reefton they were taken to the Forestry school where welfare services were provided and billets arranged. By the time the evacuation was completed a total of 301 people had been brought out of Inangahua, 169 by helicopter.

Relief Phase

Although many of the key personnel in the Inangahua civil defence organisation were unavailable at the time of the earthquake, local goodwill prevailed and the necessary staff were rapidly recruited. The structure of the organisation established in Reefton is shown in Figure VII.

Law and Order

This section of civil defence operations was controlled by a police sergeant brought in from Greymouth to replace the local

Figure VIIINANGAHUA CIVIL DEFENCE ORGANISATIONHEADQUARTERS (26 MAY 1968)

Source: Ministry of Civil Defence, Report on the Inangahua Earthquake, p.31.

officer who had taken charge of civil defence communications. Further police reinforcements later arrived from Christchurch and were given the task of organising the safe custody of valuables, and the removal and storage of furniture and personal effects from the Inangahua township. They also maintained road blocks to prevent the numerous sightseers entering the disaster area.

Communications

There was no planned communications system for civil defence in the Inangahua County at the time of the earthquake, and throughout the first day of the disaster a multitude of systems was used, including those of the M.O.W., Forestry Service, Police, Transport Department and the Amateur Radio Emergency Corps. Early on the day following the earthquake, army and air-force communication units arrived in the area and, with the police system, provided the basis of civil defence communications throughout the emergency period.

Welfare

The welfare section was the responsibility of a woman controller who, prior to the earthquake, had organised potential billets in Reefton. When evacuees arrived from Inangahua they were received at the Forestry school, registered, then billeted in private homes within Reefton. On the first night of the disaster, accommodation was found for some 250 people. As it was to be some time before houses in Inangahua were again habitable, a number of vacant houses in Reefton were taken over to provide long-term accommodation for the evacuees. The distribution of

food and clothing continued until the middle of July and temporary housing was maintained until November 1968.

Supply

This section of civil defence activity was headed by a local grocer until 27 May when the section was subdivided into materials and food. Most food supplies were obtained locally, though some commercial organisations provided generous gifts at a later stage.

Medical

As the disaster caused very few casualties the medical problem was not great, though at a later date an army medical unit was brought into the area because of the large number of work parties operating.

Transport

When the earthquake occurred, the designated civil defence transport officer was unable to undertake his duties because of an employment commitment to the Railways. An employee of the Forest Service took his place and put his department's vehicles at the disposal of civil defence. Until road access with Inangahua was re-established, transportation was heavily dependent on the private and air-force helicopters. Because of the general state of the roads within the area the army provided a number of heavy vehicles.

Recovery (Restoration) Phase

Before rescue and relief operations were underway, restoration work was being carried out. Early on the morning of the

disaster work parties began making temporary repairs to buildings in Reefton. The M.O.W. rapidly re-opened the Reefton-Greymouth road to general traffic and the Reefton-Rotokohu road to heavy traffic, though this work was undertaken independently of civil defence.

In the early afternoon of the 24th the Inangahua County consulting engineer arrived in Reefton and proceeded to establish liaison between the M.O.W., Railways, and other Government departments concerned with restoration. Co-ordinated repair work did not begin until two days later when a meeting of affected parties decided to give the restoration of Inangahua's water supply highest priority.

Inspection of suspect buildings in the area was carried out by members of the Earthquake and War Damage Commission. The Reefton Post Office was found to be in very poor condition and Post Office officials decided to have it demolished. There was, however, a conflict of interest, and the civil defence controller refused permission to demolish the building as he considered that it would jeopardise part of the communications system.

The Buller Combined Civil Defence District

Following the earthquake a survey of damage in Westport was carried out by the police and civil defence personnel. Widespread but superficial damage had occurred to houses though some commercial buildings had been severely damaged. Disruption of the water and gas systems had taken place and the town was isolated by slips blocking access roads.

At 2 p.m. in the afternoon, the Mayor of Westport and the civil defence controller decided to declare a state of local disaster, and a civil defence headquarters was established in the Council Chambers. The problem in the area was, however, far less acute than in Inangahua and Reefton, and civil defence operations were primarily concerned with restoration measures which included repairs to buildings and the water and gas mains.

Regional Co-ordination

Not until 11.30 a.m. on the morning of the 24th was contact established between Reefton and the regional headquarters in Christchurch. Following the decision to evacuate Inangahua, the Regional Commissioner was requested to provide additional helicopters. Contact was made with the Nelson town clerk who organised the mobilisation of the two private helicopters. The A.O.C. Wigram was also contacted and was able to provide the two large machines which, at the time, were fortunately flying over the South Island.¹ An aircraft was also provided to fly M.O.W. engineers over the Buller River dam. Army units were similarly provided.

Numerous requests for material assistance came from both Reefton and Westport. In the latter case the demand was for food, water piping and power cable. The Department of Industries and Commerce representative on the regional civil defence committee was requested to provide 5000 lb. of milk products, which were

¹The helicopters were at the time returning to Auckland after having taken the Duke of Edinburgh to visit the Manapouri power scheme. Partly in response to a request from Burrows, the air force has now stationed helicopters permanently at Wigram. Previously, all air force helicopters were stationed at Auckland.

later transported to Westport by the air force. Similarly, the M.O.W. provided 3000 feet of polythene pipe, fittings and two plumbers. Tarpaulins to cover damaged houses were supplied by the Railways.

National Co-ordination

The national headquarters received first news of the earthquake from the Electricity Department at 9.15 on the morning of the 24th. A decision was made to activate the communications centre and liaison officers from the air force, N.Z.B.C., and Tourist and Publicity Department joined the Director of Civil Defence. The major request for assistance passed to the national headquarters was for a water chlorination plant required in Westport. The request was passed to the M.O.W. who informed the Director that the air force had a mobile plant at Ohakea, and operators and supplies for the plant in Wellington. An air force transport, the only one available, was then despatched from Auckland to Westport via Ohakea and Wellington.

The national headquarters also organised transport for a ministerial party to go to the disaster area.¹ Having surveyed the scene on arrival, the party conferred at Reefton with representatives of the M.O.W., Earthquake and War Damage Commission, and the civil defence controller to decide upon a method for repairing and rebuilding damaged houses. On their return to Wellington on 27 May, the Ministers reported to Cabinet where it was decided to establish an interdepartmental committee 'to ensure that the fastest and most efficient use is made of all available

¹ The Ministers of Education and Civil Defence.

resources to get the West Coast back to normal'.¹

The committee was convened, then reconstituted into subcommittees - a Welfare committee presided over by the Chairman of the Social Security Commission and a Reconstruction committee chaired by the Commissioner of Works. The former committee was primarily concerned with providing social security payments for victims of the earthquake, and to facilitate this a temporary office was opened in Reefton on 28 May.

The Reconstruction committee was concerned with general restoration work and remained in contact with two committees established at Greymouth and Reefton. The function of these committees was 'collating the repair and reconstruction needs of the various areas and assessing and fixing priorities for additional assistance where local resources appeared insufficient'.²

An appraisal

Civil defence operations within the Inangahua area were effectively carried out though, had the earthquake caused a large number of casualties, the situation could have been very different. The cost of the disaster is shown in Table II.

The earthquake illustrated the importance of the co-ordinating machinery for mobilising resources at both the national and

¹ Ministry of Civil Defence, Report on the Inangahua Earthquake, p. 78.

² Ibid., p. 78. After the state of local major disaster was terminated on 30 May the M.O.W. assumed overall responsibility for reconstruction and a committee comprising representatives of the M.O.W. and the Inangahua County Council was formed to control continuing civil defence operations in the area.

TABLE II
COST OF THE INANGAHUA EARTHQUAKE¹

The approximate expenditure incurred by Government Departments as a result of the earthquake was:

	\$
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT	
Repairs to schools	121,000
ELECTRICITY DEPARTMENT	
Repairs to towers, switchgear and buildings	77,332
INTERNAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT	
Civil defence costs	43,170
MINISTRY OF WORKS	
Repairs to main highways, roads, bridges, buildings and miscellaneous services	835,803
NEW ZEALAND RAILWAYS	
Restoration of rail, buildings and bridges	474,516
POST OFFICE	
Restoration of telecommunications and buildings	144,000
SOCIAL SECURITY DEPARTMENT	
Payments to evacuees and for billeting	6,587
STATE ADVANCES CORPORATION	
Repairs to houses	53,300
Miscellaneous	
Miscellaneous payments by eight departments	13,000
TOTAL:	\$ 1,768,708
Payments made by the Earthquake and War Damage Commission	2,430,000
GRAND TOTAL:	\$ 4,198,708

¹ Table II adapted with minor modifications from Ministry of Civil Defence, Report on the Inangahua Earthquake, p. 80.

regional levels of the civil defence organisation, and the Ministry was very willing to study the experience gained during the emergency and propose improvements to the system. As very little time had elapsed since the April storm many of the recommendations were necessarily similar.

At the national level, the most apparent defect was the delay in receiving news of the earthquake which had consequently delayed the activation of the communications centre. Fortunately, this did not matter greatly as national assistance was not immediately required.¹ One of the reasons for the delay was the inability of those at Inangahua township to communicate with the outside world until the network stations of the M.O.W. and Forestry Service in other parts of the country went on the air at their normal transmission times.²

The establishment of the interdepartmental committees concerned with reconstruction and welfare following the return of the ministerial party from the West Coast was an acknowledgement of the importance of these phases of civil defence operations, and the committees could well become permanent bodies capable of being activated in any future disaster.

At the local level the most obvious deficiency with the Inangahua organisation was the unavailability of key personnel when the disaster took place. Fortunately, local goodwill and expediency prevailed and an effective organisation was rapidly

¹This situation would suggest the development of a warning system between the seismological observatory and civil defence national headquarters.

²The Ministry has suggested the immediate activation of these networks in the event of a severe earthquake - Ministry of Civil Defence, Report on the Inangahua Earthquake, p. 81.

established. Nevertheless, the problem indicated faulty planning and pointed to the fact that possession of a paper plan may bear little relation to the state of local authority preparedness.

The other notable deficiency was the failure to make early declarations of disaster. The Inangahua declaration was not issued until 11 a.m., and that in Westport not until 2 p.m. on the day of the earthquake.

Parliamentary reaction and the Civil Defence Amendment Bill

Once the Civil Defence Act had been placed on the Statute Book at the end of 1962, Parliament lost interest in the subject.¹ The one major opportunity to question the Government's administration of civil defence - the tabling of the Ombudsman's Report in 1964 - was not taken and the introduction of amendments to the Civil Defence Act in 1965 and 1967 met with a similar lack of concern.²

For a period of six years Parliament had consistently shown almost complete indifference to the state of civil defence preparations within the country. Nevertheless, the April storm and the Inangahua earthquake inevitably provoked reaction and recri-

¹ As a measure of this lack of interest, references to civil defence in N.Z.P.D. from 1963-67 inclusive totalled thirty-two, slightly more than six per year. The bulk of these were statements from the Minister of Civil Defence, usually relating to the progress of local authority civil defence planning.

² The 1965 amendments related to: provision for a Director, Deputy Director and Secretary of Civil Defence (Sections 4, 5, 6); obligation upon a local authority to ensure its civil defence plan could be implemented (33A); provision for the reviewing of plans (34A); provision for the establishment of sub-regions (37); changes to provisions relating to pensions (45); amendments to requisitioning powers (48). The 1967 amendments related to changes of wording resulting from the creation of a Ministry of Transport (53A, 53B). Both sets of amendments were passed without debate.

nation.

When Parliament resumed late in June, however, the disasters had lost much of their topicality and, in fact, a major debate on civil defence did not take place until October when the Civil Defence Amendment Bill was introduced. The Minister, D.C. Seath, informed the House that the Bill aimed:

basically at ensuring that action is taken promptly in an emergency or threatened emergency; that all local authorities have plans for an emergency; and that those serving in the various civil defence organisations are adequately protected against injury and loss during civil defence work and training.¹

He then elaborated the provisions in detail, noting that the new term 'civil defence emergency' 'gives a more readily understandable meaning to the circumstances in which the civil defence organisation may be called into operation'.²

H.J.L. May (Labour, Porirua) opened the debate for the Opposition and immediately questioned the term 'defence':

I am not speaking in a derogatory sense about ex-army or air force officers who have become administrators of civil defence groups, but the fact that the word 'defence' is used has, I believe, put some people off ... some thought should be given to the use of the word 'defence' because it does conjure up in some people's minds a semi-military organisation.³

May was in agreement with the mandatory planning requirement, though noting in rather military jargon that 'It is very little use having an organised scheme on paper if there are no troops to carry it into action'.⁴ A.J. Faulkner (Labour, Roskill) also

¹ N.Z.P.D., Vol. 357, pp. 2061-2, 3 October, 1968.

² Ibid., p. 2062.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

called for the name of the organisation to be changed, but the Minister was unmoved. He considered that overseas use of the term justified its retention in New Zealand and added that 'it has been made perfectly clear that civil defence has no military connotations'.¹

The Civil Defence Amendment Bill was then referred to the Local Bills Committee and returned to the House unaltered on 17 December 1968. J.A. Walding (Labour, Palmerston North) opened the debate for the Opposition with considerable vigour, claiming that 'civil defence in this country is just a farce and a joke, and in most communities it is just a hopeless mess'.² He then proceeded to quote a series of press criticisms of civil defence and claimed that:

I believe a great mistake was made when the Government charged the local authorities with the responsibility of organising civil defence emergency organisations and gave them no clear objectives to strive for.³

Despite his criticism of local authority control, Walding did not put forward proposals for a new system, but went on to criticise the level of Government financial assistance to the local authorities.

H.J.L. May then informed the House that:

The fire service should be the number one organisation because it is operating in most areas. The Police Department is the second organisation that must come into any operation ... I say we must have a change of emphasis in the whole structure of civil defence.⁴

¹ Ibid., p. 2064.

² Ibid., Vol. 359, p. 3943, 17 December, 1968.

³ Ibid., p. 3944.

⁴ Ibid., p. 3948. At a later date May claimed that the Police should have control in an emergency (Interview: Wellington, 2 September, 1969).

May's comments conflicted with those of the Leader of the Opposition who had stated after the April storm that the police should be in control.¹

The debate then degenerated into a memory contest following an accusation from H.R. Lapwood (National, Rotorua) that the last Labour Government had not passed any civil defence legislation.

Although the overall debate was not of a high standard, civil defence operations during 1968 had generated more Parliamentary interest in the subject than had been evident at any time during the preceding five years.

While Opposition criticism did not generate a re-appraisal of the basis on which civil defence was organised, it did place the Ministry somewhat on the defensive. The Annual Report of the Department of Internal Affairs in 1969 gave considerable space to a justification of the existing organisational arrangements:

Any doubts there may have been about the wisdom of placing the primary responsibility for civil defence in the hands of the territorial local authorities must surely have been dispelled by the experiences of last year. Advocates of placing responsibility solely in the hands of the Police or armed services overlook the tremendous potential available in the local community itself. They also forget that centrally employed professional forces, such as the Police or armed services, are often very thinly represented, or in the case of the armed services not represented at all, in many parts of the country. Without reinforcements - which takes time - they cannot hope to handle a situation which has assumed proportions beyond the immediate personnel available. Such forces, of course, have their own well defined and accepted role in civil defence, and this is spelt out in all national, regional and local plans.²

For reasons of their geographical distribution, the armed

¹ May's claim for the fire service appeared to be the result of his long association with the organisation.

² A.J.H.R., Report of the Department of Internal Affairs, H.22, 1969, p. 5.

services must necessarily play a supporting rather than controlling role in civil defence, but the position of the Police is not as clear.¹ The Police claim that they should control civil defence operations because of their command ability and their identification by the public² as an emergency organisation.³

At the present time the police role in civil defence is the maintenance of law and order during a disaster, and the identification and removal of the dead. In a major disaster, and particularly one affecting a city, existing police resources may well be placed under severe strain.⁴ To remove members of the police to controlling positions within a civil defence organisation may result in the withdrawal of personnel urgently required in their professional capacity. In a small community the demand for the police in their professional role may well exceed the demand for their organisational and co-ordinating ability, and in this field they do not have a monopoly of skills.⁵

From the previous discussion of the Inangahua earthquake it was shown that civil defence operations passed through three,

¹Also military resources may not be available because of overseas commitments.

²This was certainly evident in Blenheim, see Chapter VI, pp.116-117.

³These views have been ascertained in general conversation with members of the police.

⁴The provision in the Civil Defence Act for the creation of volunteer civil defence police was an acknowledgement of this fact. Civil defence police, of which there is an establishment of 3,500, may only be used during a state of national emergency or civil defence emergency.

⁵In many rural communities only a single police officer is usually present. This was the case at Reefton. Here the officer was seconded to the civil defence organisation as the communications controller, though it was, however, possible to replace him with an officer brought in from Greymouth.

though not mutually exclusive, phases - Rescue - Relief - Recovery (Restoration). The rescue phase was the evacuation of the Inangahua township. The relief phase began when the evacuees arrived in Reefton - and in some cases continued long after the emergency was lifted. The recovery phase began almost immediately after the earthquake occurred and also continued beyond the immediate emergency period. The services of the police were most in demand during the rescue phase, and during the early period of the relief phase, but then declining during the recovery period. While there may be some merit in suggesting police control of the rescue phase, this must be weighed against the possibility of complicating the established lines of authority now existing throughout all the phases of civil defence operations. To suggest, however, that the police should control all operational phases would appear to result from a failure to appreciate the actual function of civil defence.

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CHAPTER VIII

EVALUATION

The months of April and May 1968 stand as something of a landmark in the development of civil defence. Within this short period the organisation was twice put to the test and its strengths and weaknesses clearly exposed. The April storm caught both the country and the civil defence organisation by surprise and in the recriminatory atmosphere which followed critical attention focussed on the organisation to an unprecedented extent.

Criticism of the national headquarters' failure to give storm warnings was warranted, although much of the other criticism was misplaced. In its aftermath the effects of the storm on land were exaggerated, particularly by the Leader of the Opposition who attempted to make political capital out of the apparent failure of civil defence. Some local authorities could have shown greater presence of mind by declaring emergencies as precautionary measures but these arguments ignored the fact that in no part of the country affected by the storm had the normal emergency utilities been in danger of being overwhelmed.

Nevertheless, the adverse criticism did little to enhance the credibility of civil defence as an emergency organisation, although for the first time the connection with natural disaster was explicitly established in the public mind - a connection which was to be reinforced only six weeks later with the Inangahua earthquake.

If the April storm pointed to weaknesses in the organisation the response to the earthquake was the success story of 1968 and did much to restore the organisation's tarnished image, for it demonstrated its effectiveness as a method for the mobilisation and co-ordination of Government and local authority resources. Even so, it must be remembered that the earthquake affected only a small rural population and produced an evacuation rather than a casualty problem. Furthermore, if the necessity for an immediate response before external assistance became available emphasised the wisdom of having placed the ultimate responsibility for community safety with the local authorities, the moribund state of the Inangahua County organisation illustrated the problem of maintaining a local organisation in a state of readiness for an indefinite period of time.

The nature of the response also established the necessity for extending civil defence operations beyond the immediate tasks of rescue and relief to the longer term requirements of restoration. The creation of two Government interdepartmental committees to supervise welfare and reconstruction was an acknowledgement of this role.

The success of civil defence operations at Inangahua was widely recognised by the press, and provided salutary evidence of the organisation's increased credibility. In November 1968, the Christchurch Star, previously one of the most ardent critics, commented that:

The violent storms in Christchurch and Southland earlier this year and the disastrous earthquake at Inangahua which followed them have shown the need for an efficient civil defence organisation ... For some time after it was

established, the civil defence organisation was not appreciated because too many people believed that its only purpose was to swing into action in a time of war and they saw little prospect of this. It is now quite obvious that civil defence is an essential peacetime organisation well geared to function in any emergency.¹

But, with the events of 1968 now receding into memory there is a danger - all too apparent in the past - that concern for natural disaster and civil defence will once again decline to a level of complacency and indifference.

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The development of civil defence in this country since the 1930's has been characterised by long periods of apathy punctuated with sudden bursts of activity and interest. This has, for the most part reflected the country's traditional preoccupation with the threat of enemy attack, and conversely its failure to appreciate the persistent danger of natural disaster.

The Murchison and Napier earthquakes in the early years of this century dramatically illustrated the acute danger of natural disaster, yet the first response to the problem in the form of the 1932 Public Safety Conservation Act was of very limited scope. It was, in fact, an indication of the degree of concern felt at that time, that the Government included natural disaster provisions in essentially anti-riot legislation. The Act failed to provide for the establishment of a permanent emergency organisation or for any comprehensive central and local government planning to deal with future disasters, and it appeared that the

¹Christchurch Star, 12 November, 1968.

Government was generally indifferent to a repetition of the Napier experience.

Not until the late 1930's was a comprehensive civil defence scheme established and then it was in response to the growing threat of war. The Emergency Precautions Scheme was designed to cope with both hostile attack and natural disaster and it proved its value in the latter capacity during the Wellington-Wairarapa earthquake of 1942. But, despite this lesson, the scheme was abandoned at the end of the war, although by passing the Earthquake and War Damage Act in 1944 the Government had shown itself to be well aware of the economic significance of natural disaster. Its failure, therefore, to maintain a permanent emergency organisation amounted to almost callous indifference.

After the war emergency planning fell into abeyance for eight years and the introduction of the Local Authorities Emergency Powers Bill in 1953 provided a poor substitute for the wartime scheme.

Ostensibly the Bill was introduced primarily in response to the threat of natural disaster, though evidence suggests that the fear of attack was still the dominant concern. Nevertheless, the Act was singularly inadequate to deal with the problems with which it was designed to cope. Although the Government undertook its own emergency planning in 1954, the absence of permanent local authority emergency organisations precluded an effectively co-ordinated local and central Government disaster response.

While there appeared to be an element of uncertainty in the underlying reasons for introducing the 1953 legislation this was

certainly not the case with the establishment of the Ministry of Civil Defence in April 1959. Through the medium of the 1958 Defence Review the Labour Government had expressed the belief that developments in military technology threatened the safety of New Zealand.

With the passage of time, the Defence Review may now be regarded as an over-reaction to an undefined threat, although it is not difficult to see why New Zealand did react in such a manner. The technological developments took place against a backdrop of the cold war and many countries were showing a renewed interest in civil defence. In view of New Zealand's traditional willingness to follow the example of others, similar interest was, therefore, not unexpected. Furthermore, Soviet rocket testing in the Pacific had demonstrated that New Zealand's geographical isolation did not guarantee invulnerability to missile attack should some nation (which at that time could only be the Soviet Union) regard the country as a potential target in a future war. While the threat of aggression was purely hypothetical, the Labour Government nevertheless believed that a threat existed, and consequently embarked upon a civil defence programme.

Although the proposed scheme was also intended to cope with natural disaster, this appeared as little more than an afterthought - a status the threat was to retain throughout the early 1960's. Nevertheless, the renewed interest in civil defence did have the effect of placing an emergency scheme on a permanent basis for the first time.

With the creation of the Ministry of Civil Defence in 1959, New Zealand in effect readopted the structure of its own wartime, and distinctly British, system of civil defence. But while the new scheme bore a close structural resemblance to wartime practice, it differed in terms of organisational principles. Although it was initially envisaged that the local authorities would establish civil defence corps on para-military lines, this approach did not eventuate. Instead, civil defence was designed to provide the means for mobilising and co-ordinating existing central and local government resources, and only at the local level was a large personnel establishment required for a warden system.

Intention, however, was not matched with action, and it was evident that the Government considered the development of civil defence a low priority commitment. This was reflected in the meagre personnel and material resources placed at the disposal of the Ministry of Civil Defence which, in turn, showed a marked reluctance to undertake the national planning obligations imposed upon it by the Civil Defence Act.

In view of the Government's attitude it was, therefore, not surprising that the local authorities expressed little enthusiasm for civil defence. They viewed the 'threat' of nuclear attack with scepticism and were reluctant to undertake a responsibility which not only added to their financial and administrative burden, but was one which the Government itself did not appear to take seriously.

The lack of visible organisational development did little to instil public confidence in civil defence and, in fact, in a

number of ways the organisation seemed intent upon alienating what public support existed. The aura of secrecy surrounding civil defence in its early years was certainly not designed to generate public awareness of the organisation's function, and the Minister's unfortunate remarks about the press during the passage of the Civil Defence Act in 1962 guaranteed an unsympathetic hearing from that quarter.

But probably the main reason why civil defence failed to generate public interest stemmed from the prominence given to the 'threat' of nuclear attack. Such a threat seemed non-existent. There was no atmosphere of impending crisis and, in the absence of any visible evidence of civil defence preparations, no real reason for the public to take it all seriously.

The limited organisational development during the early 1960's was, in fact, a clear indication that the Government was prepared to pay little more than lip service to the threat of attack; it had neither the intention nor the capability of protecting the country against such an event. But the lack of progress with civil defence was, at the same time, to ignore the 'other' role of the organisation - that of coping with natural disaster.

The decision in 1964 to place priority on natural disaster was certainly long overdue and, in fact, it stands as a measure of this country's concern for the problem that such a decision had to be made at all. But even then the decision did not appear to have been based on any comprehensive reappraisal of the country's vulnerability to the threat, but resulted instead from the growing belief that protection against a nuclear attack was no longer

necessary. Natural disaster therefore - the most pressing reason for an effective emergency organisation - received only de facto recognition.

Thus, although natural disaster had been a consideration in civil defence policy since 1959, only after 1964 did an overt connection between civil defence and natural disaster gradually become established. Even then, in the absence of publicity the connection remained poorly defined and not until the April storm and the Inangahua earthquake in 1968 did the public begin to recognise that civil defence could be equated with peacetime emergency.

Although this connection now appears to be firmly established¹ looking back it is difficult to understand why successive Governments in the past were so indifferent to the need for a permanent emergency organisation to cope with natural disaster.

The time scale against which disasters take place may be part of the explanation, and furthermore, such events are transient and very soon forgotten in the minds of the public and politicians alike.²

The particular circumstances surrounding certain past disasters may also have been a contributing factor. The Napier earthquake, which should have provided ample warning of the need for a permanent emergency organisation, occurred at a time when

¹ In Blenheim, for example, it was found that 66 percent of the respondents knew that civil defence was concerned with natural disaster. For full details see Appendix B, Question I.

² It was found in Blenheim, for example, that 77 percent of the respondents remembered feeling the Inangahua earthquake, but only 54 percent could recall the year in which it had taken place. For full details see Appendix B, Questions V and VI.

the country's attention was focussed on the chronic economic situation. Similarly, the Wellington-Wairarapa earthquake of 1942 took place when the country was suffering acute anxiety over the possibility of a Japanese attack. Both these events were therefore overshadowed by the extraordinary circumstances prevailing at the time. But this is only to offer palliatives for a tradition of Government, local authority and public indifference to the problem.

Indifference, however, cannot be equated with ignorance. On four occasions in the past - 1932, 1940, 1953 and 1959 - successive Governments have shown themselves to be aware of natural disaster. Yet, not only in each case has it required the additional stimulus of either the threat of enemy attack or civil disorder to promote Government action, but only in the most recent case has this taken the form of a permanent emergency organisation.

Even New Zealand's apparent preoccupation with the threat of enemy attack has, for the most part, been something of an illusion. Only during the war period, when there was a sense of impending crisis, was a civil defence scheme pursued with any vigour. The inadequacy of emergency planning in the 1950's and the failure to press the development of civil defence in the early 1960's betrayed a complete lack of conviction in the belief that the country was vulnerable to attack.

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As twelve years have now elapsed since the present civil defence scheme was implemented, it seems appropriate to ask in conclusion, is the country now adequately prepared to cope with any form of emergency?

If the response to the Inangahua earthquake can be taken as a guide, civil defence undoubtedly has the ability to cope with any future emergency on that scale.¹ Unfortunately, it is not the small emergency which presents the real problem, but rather the threat of a major disaster in one of the main centres or large provincial towns. It is here that the credibility of civil defence remains in greatest doubt.

Little attention has been given, for example, to the special civil defence problems of the commercial and industrial areas of the metropolitan and larger urban centres. Yet, it is here in the event of a severe earthquake that the greatest danger to life exists. Also in view of the present lack of recognition for civil defence as an emergency organisation, it is doubtful whether any local organisation would be able to exercise the level of social control necessary for the effective implementation of rescue and relief measures in a major disaster.

Clearly then, if civil defence is to raise its credibility as an emergency organisation within the next decade, urgent attention must be given to such problems. Lack of recognition can only be remedied through a carefully conceived and continuous public relations and education campaign. No effort should be spared to

¹During 1970 the local civil defence organisations at Whakatane and Nelson demonstrated their ability to cope with severe flooding. While the floods in both areas did not reach disaster proportions early declarations of states of civil defence emergency enabled preventative measures to be taken.

convince an indifferent population that familiarity with civil defence is essential if it is to be effective. Further organisational development could ideally be directed to the establishment of trained emergency teams in every block, factory, shop and office. But only when this is combined with widespread public recognition of the role of civil defence will it be possible to claim that the country is adequately prepared.

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APPENDIX A

In August 1969, use was made of a Political Science Department pre-general election opinion poll in the St. Albans electorate to briefly question residents on civil defence. The poll covered a random sample of 162 residents drawn from the Parliamentary electoral roll.

Question I

Could you tell me where your nearest civil defence warden post is located? Correct answer: The nearest state primary school.

<u>Response</u>	<u>%</u>
Correct	29
Indeterminate (school but undefined)	1
Don't know	70
Total:	<u>100%</u>

APPENDIX B

In August 1970, 103 residents of Blenheim were interviewed in an attempt to gauge public awareness and knowledge of the local civil defence organisation. Blenheim, a town of 12,000, 200 miles north of Christchurch, was chosen for the survey as the local civil defence organisation is generally regarded as being of a high standard.

The random sample was drawn from the Borough District Electors' Roll. This had two effects. Firstly, the sample was biased towards older residents, very few in the 20-30 age group were interviewed. Secondly, as the roll was two years old, the sample was biased towards residents who had been in the district for some time.

Question I

Could you tell me what the purpose of civil defence is?

<u>Response</u>	<u>%</u>
1. War	4
2. Natural Disaster	66
3. Accidents	0
4. Other	3
5. No Answer	0
6. Don't know	6
Combinations:	
1, 2	17
2, 3	2
1, 2, 3	2
	<hr/>
Total:	100%
	<hr/>

Question II

From the following list, could you tell me which one is directly responsible for civil defence in Blenheim? (List read out.) Correct answer: Borough and County Councils.

<u>Response</u>	<u>%</u>
Police	54
Army	10
Fire Brigade	1
Air force	1
Borough and County Councils	25
Government	4
No answer	0
Don't know	5
Total:	<u>100%</u>

Question III

Could you tell me where your nearest civil defence warden post is located? Correct answer: The nearest state primary school.

<u>Response</u>	<u>%</u>
Correct	17
Incorrect	16
Indeterminate (school but undefined)	1
No answer	1
Don't know	65
Total:	<u>100%</u>

Question IV

If an earthquake occurred, and a member of your family was trapped in the house, and you were unable to rescue him/her, where would you turn for help? Only the first avenue of help was recorded.

<u>Response</u>	<u>%</u>
Neighbour	27
Warden post	24
Police	27
Hospital	3
Fire Brigade	1
Other	10
No answer	4
Don't know	4
Total:	<u>100%</u>

Question V

Do you remember feeling the Inangahua earthquake in Blenheim?

<u>Response</u>	<u>%</u>
Yes	77
No	17
Not here at the time	3
No answer	3
Total:	<u>100%</u>

Question VI

Could you tell me when the Inangahua earthquake occurred?
Correct answer: 1968.

<u>Response</u>	<u>%</u>
Correct	54
Incorrect	37
Don't know	9
Total:	<u>100%</u>